FUTURE

JUNE
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combined with SCIENCE FICTION

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by HUGO GERNSBACK

THE INVISIBLE CONTINENT
An Off Trail Novelet
by RUSSELL BLAIKLOCK

ALSO
KUMMER
RAYMOND F. JONES
TUCKER

CASH PRIZE CONTEST

JOHN [illegible]

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"The 7 Keys to Power alleges to teach," The author says, "All the Mysteries of Life from the Cradle to the Grave—and Beyond. It tells you the particular day and hour to do anything you desire, whether it be in the light of the moon, sun, or in total darkness."

He claims, "The power to get what you want revealed at last, for the first time since the dawn of creation. The very same power which the ancient Chaldeans, Cuthic, Priests, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Sumerians used is at our disposal today."

He says, "Follow the simple directions, and you can do anything you desire. No one can tell how these Master Forces are used without knowing about this book, but with it you can mold anyone to your will."

From this book, He says, "You can learn the arts of an old Science as practiced by the Ancient Priestly Orders. Their marvels were almost beyond belief. You, too, can learn to do them all with the instructions written in this Book," Lewis de Claremont claims, "It would be a shame if these things could all be yours and you failed to grasp them."

He claims, "It is every man's birthright to have these things of life: MONEY! GOOD HEALTH! HAPPINESS! If you lack any of these, then this book has an important message for you. No matter what you need, there exists a spiritual power which is abundantly able to bring you whatever things you need."

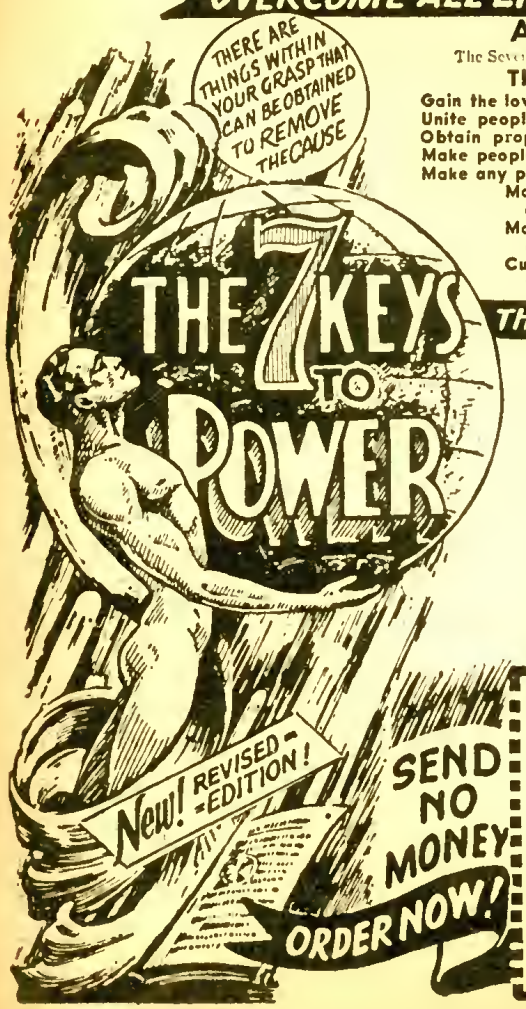
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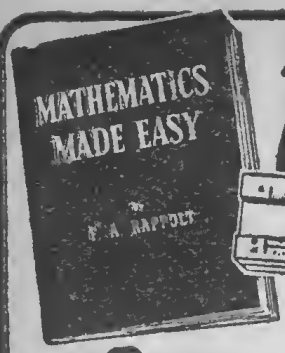
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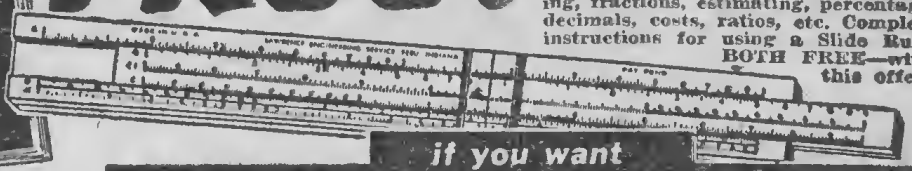
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Volume Two, Number Five *June, 1942*

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FEATURE NOVELET

INVISIBLE CONTINENT **Russell Blaiklock** **10**

Atlentis wes e thing of legend end fentesy to them until they hit the crest of the time-weve . . . end found themselves plunged into incredible edventure!

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The fether of megezine science-fiction presents e unique little vignette.

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Not only shouldn't the ship heve been there in the first place, but they couldn't find any trece of ceptain or crew!

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The source of whet they sought lay in the core of the sun itself; and within, e grim cosmic jest wes ebout to work its way out.

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He hoped that the machine would have some effect upon his appeal . . it did!

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Something wes happening out in spece, something unbelieveble. They hed to find out the meening of the great creters suddenly appearing on Earth!

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He found Mers literelly swerming with life!

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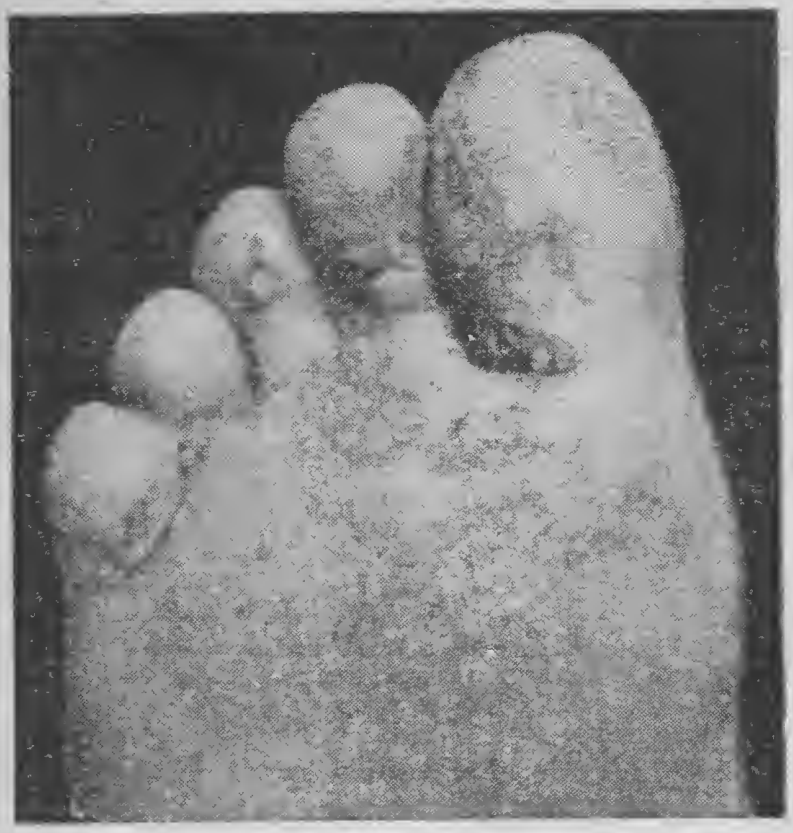
STATION X **Everyone** **100**

COVER BY JOHN R. FORTE, JR.

(from e scene in "The Princess of Detroit" by Bob Tucker)

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FOOT ITCH
ATHLETE'S FOOT



PAY NOTHING TILL RELIEVED

Send Coupon

At least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

WHY TAKE CHANCES?

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy the germ, whereas, upon contact, laboratory tests show that H. F. will kill the germ Tinea Trichophyton within 15 seconds.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. H. F. gently peels the skin, which enables it to get to parasites which exist under the outer cuticle.

ITCHING OFTEN RELIEVED QUICKLY

As soon as you apply H. F. you may find that the itching is relieved. You should paint the infected part with H. F. every night until your feet are better. Usually this takes from three to ten days.

H. F. should leave the skin soft and smooth. You may marvel at the quick way it brings you relief. It costs you nothing to try, so if you are troubled with Athlete's Foot why wait a day longer?

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L. R. P., Bronx, N.Y.	10	155	145	10
Mrs. M. B., Ridgewood, N. J.	10	185	174	11
Mrs. H. F., Glen Cove, L. I.	10	136	126	10
Mrs. L. A. T., Vineland, N. J.	10	162	152	10
A. B., New York City	10	182	172	10
F. W., Jersey City, N. J.	10	177	167	10
T. J. P., Newark, N. J.	10	205	192	13
Mrs. F. P., Newark, N. J.	10	190	180	10
A. N. J., Morton, Pa.	10	192	184	12
Mrs. B. L. G., Newark, N. J.	10	136	125	11
Mr. L., New York City	10	187	176	11
Mrs. M. U., East Orange, N. J.	10	240	230	10
Mrs. B. S., Whitestone, L. I.	10	155	145	10
E. H. K., Howard Beach, L. I.	10	154	144	10
Mrs. L. L., Bogota, N. J.	10	184	174	10

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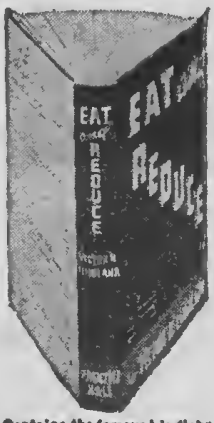
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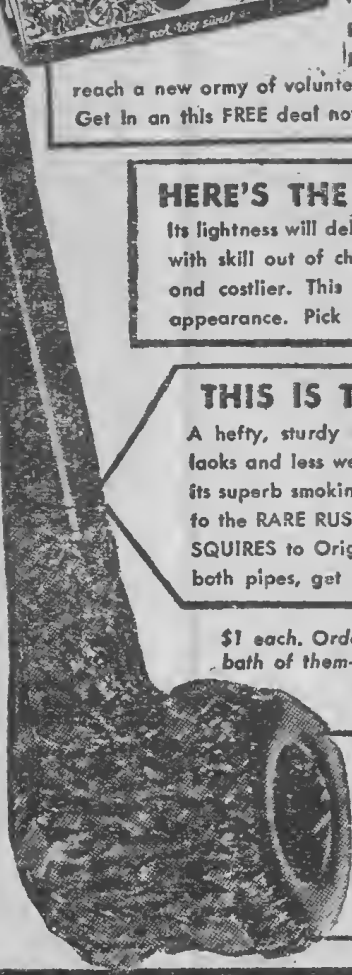
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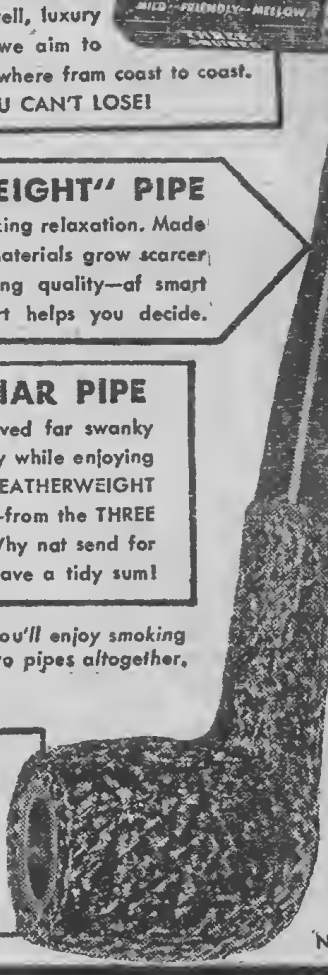
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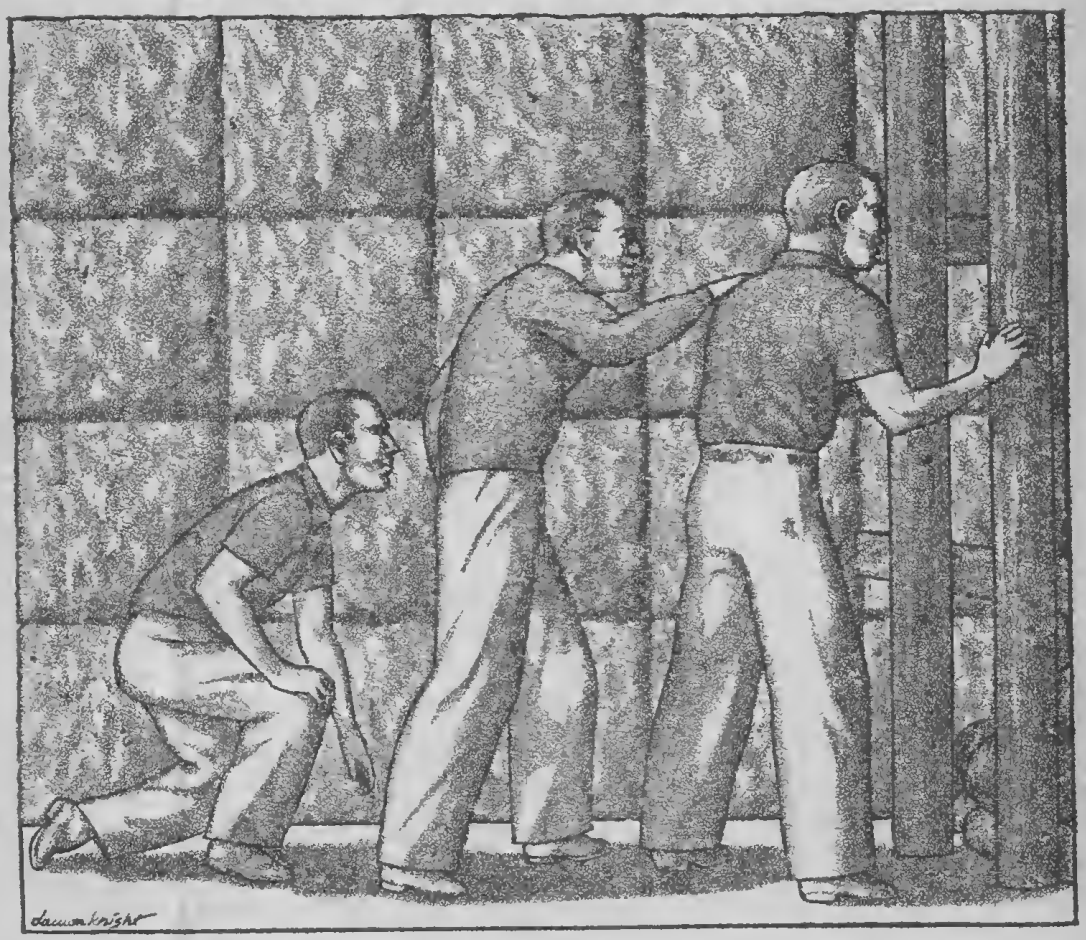
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Name

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INVISIBLE CONTINENT



A COMPLETE NOVELET

CHAPTER I

THE IMPROBABLE

LIKE some elongated, sinuous monster of the deep, the slime-encrusted telegraph cable climbed over the forward rail of the *Cerberus* and crawled slowly across the fore-deck into the rapacious maw of the scraper, which daily gorged itself on endless miles of lead and copper. From the other side of this mechanism, the cable emerged, bright and shiny, from its recent scrubbing, passing into the delicate probing fingers of the sensitive electrical instruments whose duty it was to detect the tiniest of perforations in its lead sheath. With the stamp of their approval, the cable then pursued its way over the deck-rollers, to slip glistening in the sun, over the stern and disappear once more into the calm depths of the Atlantic, while the ship slid slowly forward under the ponderous weight of the many suspended fathoms.

Leaning against the after-side of the

When they picked up the strange cable, they little suspected that it would lead to a world that had existed, to them, only in legend. But Atlantis was real—a little too real for their health!

Illustrated by Damon Knight



by RUSSELL BLAIKLOCK

scraper-house, Larry Carmichael, senior radio operator, idly watched the cable expert working busily among his dials and meters, ever alert to stop the ship ere a defective section of the cable dropped again beneath the waves. Overhead, Captain Bob Clarke came out on the bridge and stood looking off to the north.

"Hi, skipper!" called Larry, "why the anxious frown? Glass falling again or is it still that little blonde in Newark?"

"I don't like those swells. Looks like a blow coming down from the Bay of Biscay, and you know what that means in these waters."

"Nothing very serious in our radio reports."

"I know, but every foot we rise adds tons to the weight of that cable. Why, it would carry away like a cobweb under the strain of a ten-foot wave."

"Bob's singing the blues again, Don Jim," said Larry, turning once more toward the open door of the test-house.

"Captain Clarke," replied Don Jaimie Iruzaldia, without turning from the dial panel, "yields easily to morbid melancholia."

"Oh yeah. What's a twenty letter word for pessimist?" queried Larry with a grin. "You college-trained men always—"

He was interrupted by a cry from the forepeak.

"A break! A break!"

Instantly, Iruzaldia's hand shot to the auxiliary engine-room telegraph. "Stop." Then, "Full astern." The *Cerberus* shuddered above the wildly threshing propeller.

Above on the bridge, Captain Clarke tensely watched the diminishing progress of the ragged break in the cable as the ship slowly lost way. Ahead, the lookout stood poised over the brake-clamp, ready to slam home the lever the instant the ship came to a stand.

Suddenly, with a sharp report, the cable parted and, hissing like a gigantic serpent, the freed end went flying forward. Tearing the heavy brake-clamp from the deck and hurling the lookout crashing against the rail, it dropped with a mighty splash into the sea. The sailor lay white and crumpled on the deck, one arm twisted at a grotesque angle.

Suddenly relieved of the weight, the bow of the *Cerberus* heaved itself far out of the water and, with the deck canted to a dangerous angle, the stern was left to the mercy of the waves that threatened momentarily to board her.

"Bend on a buoy-line and cast off the other end of that cable, pronto," roared Bob to the men at the stern.

"Good bye profits," sighed Larry dolefully.

"Nonsense, man," snapped Bob, turning on him. "We can pick up that buoy after the storm and still pull through with a good margin on our contract, but if we hang onto that cable end and this tub founders, we're sunk."

"YOU'RE right on both counts, skipper," admitted Larry, "but I hate the delay and—Good Grief! Look! That dumb-bell let it go without a buoy-line. There goes every dime you and I've got in the world. What a sucker I was to shoot my whole wad on this clambake."

"And who is the singer of the blues now?" asked Don Jaime coming up. "Is it not so, Captain Bob, that you can find this little spot in the whole ocean as easily as friend Larry can scent out a bar in a strange port?"

"Well, perhaps not quite so efficiently as that," laughed Bob.

"Little bright angel of hope, aren't you, Don Jim?" asked Larry in disgust.

"Beg pardon, sir. We've carried Johnson below. His arm's broken," said a sailor approaching.

"Poor devil! All right, Martin. Excuse me, gentlemen," said Bob, turning to the others. "Poseidon waits when Aesculapius calls."

"Some more of your Dago fairy stories, I suppose," remarked Larry. "Who were those bums?"

"Greeks to you, Mr. Marconi," called back Bob.

"You shouldn't jeer at the captain's hobby, so," said Don Jaimie. "The world lost a great archaeologist when he turned to the sea. He wrote a monograph on Egyptology when we were at Harvard that won him a scholarship, but he turned it down to enter Annapolis."

"Oh, I just like to kid him a bit when he springs some of those unpronouncable names like this Mr. S. Q. Oppolis. And, by the way, speaking of names, that one of yours gave me a lot of trouble until I finally gave it up. Somehow, it doesn't sound Spanish to me."

"Well," replied Iruzaldia smiling, "I am not rightly Spanish, you know. I was born in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa and my name means 'The Three Horse' in Eskuara, which is the language of my people. I don't know how my family acquired it, though it goes back many centuries. However, since you find the name difficult, I don't mind in the least your calling me 'Don Jim.' It sounds rather Americanized and I like Americans. But tell me, Larry, where did you first meet Bob?"

"Oh, we're old buddies. Y'see, we served on the same battlewagon in the navy."

"So you are a navy man, too?"

"Oh sure. There's always been Carmichaels in the navy. My old man was a chief bosun's mate on the *Cyclops* when she was lost during the World War. So as soon as I was old enough I joined up to keep the tradition alive."

"And that's where you met Bob."

"Yeah, only of course, we didn't mingle socially. He was a two-striper in the afterguard and I was only a key-pounding gob, but he took a fancy to me, made me study and managed to wangle me a master's rating in radio. We both quit the service about the same time, but found we still had salt in our veins, so Bob bought an interest in this tub, took me on to pound

the brass and made me save my money. When you came along with this charter to repair the Azores-Lisbon cable, Bob took my savings and cut me in on the contract. And that's the story, except that Bob's still trying to educate me."

"And succeeding remarkably," declared Don Jim, "though I must admit your American idioms have me puzzled at times."

"Oh, I'm just a rough neck," replied Larry. "Don't try to analyze my English, it's hopeless. But don't think I don't appreciate the value of an education. I'd give my right eye to be half as smart as Bob, but for Pete's sake, don't tell him I said so, or he'll have me burning midnight oil by the gallon. I need my beauty sleep."

"That suggests that a little of your 'beauty sleep' might be good for all of us. If the wind subsides, we will have a busy day with the grappling hooks tomorrow. We had best eat and turn in."

THROUGH the night, with barely speed enough for steerageway, the *Cerberus* steamed slowly around in the same monotonous circle; while the watch officer so constantly checked her drift by the stars, that by morning her position was certain within a quarter of a mile. Day broke on a calm, windless sea. Through endless hours, the ship moved slowly back and forth across the spot where the cable had broken, the grappling hooks plowing deep furrows in the age-old ooze that lay on the time-forgotten floor of the ocean.

Darkness fell and still nothing. Gloom pervaded the after-cabin, where Bob, Larry and Don Jim sat smoking moodily after a silent meal.

"Well," said Larry at length, "I suppose this means two days back to Ponta Delgada to pick up the cable again and then another eight days trailing it to reach the break—wherever that is."

"I tell you we're right over it," snapped out Bob, with some asperity. "If we keep grappling, we're bound to get results."

"Yeah. We've been getting those all day. Seaweed and a lot of stinking muck. Not even a rusty tin can or a respectable old rubber-boot."

"You lack the patient philosophy of the fisherman, Larry," put in Don Jim soothingly. "Tomorrow is yet another day."

"Probably followed by Wednesday, Thursday and Friday," retorted Larry. "You Pollyannas make me sick."

Barely had the sun risen the next morning, when one of the grapples hooked something. As it broke the water with the long, mud-covered, hawser-like cable in its grasp, a cheer went up from the crew.

"The Lisbon end!" cried Larry, "See that mud! Now we're getting somewhere."

Quickly the *Cerberus* was headed westward and the cable heaved onto the deck and threaded through the scraper and test houses. With a scarcely perceptible bow wave the ship moved off once more, to retrace her way toward the break.

Hardly had she gotten under way, when her auxiliary engine-room telegraph rang, "Stop," and Don Jim emerged from the test house, a frown of puzzlement on his face. He called Bob and Larry to him.

"I am more than sorry to disappoint you," he said quietly, "but this is not our cable."

"But there are no other cable-lines in this part of the Atlantic," expostulated Bob.

"A fact of which I am well aware, my friend. But, I repeat, this is not the Azores-Lisbon cable."

"How the devil do *you* know!" cried Larry. "A cable's a cable, or do they brand them like cattle?"

"Come and see for yourselves," answered Don Jim.

They stepped around the scraper-house and there, stretching into the test-room, instead of the usual lead-covered cable, was a bar of light-shot brilliance which caught the sunshine and reflected back a rosy glow from its translucent depths.

Larry stepped forward and laid his hand upon it. "Glass!" he ventured.

"NO," replied Don Jim. "Watch!" He picked up a sharpened scraping knife and drew it along the taut cable. From the edge of the knife, a curled shaving rolled away like wood from a plane.

"Well, it certainly looks like glass," said Larry. "Notice how transparent it is. Why, you can see right in to that red core. What do you make of it?"

"I am afraid to even venture a guess," answered Don Jim. "I am sure I never heard of a transparent metal, and yet—" He paused, musing.

"But whose cable is it, then," burst out Bob, "and what's it doing here?"

"Well, we'll soon have the answer to that," said Larry, "All we've got to do is tap in and call 'central,' and maybe if she's

a nice girl, she'll tell us what that glassy junk is." He dashed into the radio cabin, returning almost immediately with a pair of head phones and a test set.

In a moment, a portion of the glass-like cover was stripped away, exposing the red core. This proved to be a mineral substance resembling soft cement. Digging carefully into this, Larry soon laid bare multitudinous tiny wires of copper-bronze. "Phone cable," he stated laconically. Clipping the leads of the head-set to two of the wires, he listened; while the others stood by, watching him expectantly. He shook his head. Rapidly, he went over the rest of the wires, one by one.

"All dead," he commented at length. "Guess we'll have to give them a buzz. Wait till I run a line from the ship's phone."

He dived again into the radio-shack and soon came out, trailing a rubber-covered cable. Fastening this to the terminals of his test set, he again made a connection with the tiny wires.

"All right, Bob, throw in that center switch on the upper panel and we'll soon get a line on this switch-board queen. Perhaps if she's got a friend, I might be liberal and fix it up for you, too. You know I'm—Hell, no! Not that one! That's the main radio sw——"

Too late. The heavy copper blades sank home into the waiting clips.

The *Cerberus* heaved suddenly upward, as though on the crest of a tidal wave. The air seemed to be rushing in from all directions at once; yet Larry noticed the utter absence of all sound. A vertigo seized him. His brain appeared to be revolving in his skull. Then this sensation expanded to include his whole being and he felt as though he were sinking. Not a sense of falling, but as though he were being drawn into the vortex of some mighty whirlpool. A sort of metallic buzzing in his ears seemed to penetrate into his head until his nose, his lips, his entire face vibrated in synchronism to the sound. His throat was closing. He was strangling.

CHAPTER II

UNCHARTED COASTS

LARRY gasped and opened his eyes. Don Jim was bending over him solicitously and Bob was holding his head in the crook of one arm, while in his other hand, he held a silver flask. The taste of raw spirits burned on Larry's palate. He felt as though he had died and been reborn again. A painful process.

"What happened?" he asked, trying to struggle to his feet, only to slump back, his brain reeling giddily.

"Take it easy, old man," answered Bob. "We were all knocked out, only you fell and hit your head on a stanchion."

"You have been unconscious some time," put in Don Jim. "We had to leave you to go and quiet the crew, who were in a mad panic of superstitious fear."

"Why superstitious?" asked Larry. "Surely they've heard of tidal waves before."

"That's what you think," answered Bob. "Take a look over the starboard rail."

Larry turned his head. There, where there should have been nothing but a waste of waters, a low, undulating coast-line stretched away to the westward. Far in the distance, a lone mountain peak raised its conical head majestically skyward, snow-capped and gleaming in the sun.

"Great Scott!" he cried in amazement. "What is it?"

"We don't know," answered Don Jim soberly. "When we regained consciousness, there it was. A volcanic upheaval, maybe —still—well, we don't know."

By this time, Larry had recovered sufficiently to walk weakly to the rail, where he studied the coast curiously through the binoculars that Bob handed him.

"Volcanic upheaval, my eye," he said after a moment. "There's trees over there and they don't grow on the bottom of the ocean."

"Yes, we know," replied Bob, "but Don Jim quieted the crew with his volcanic explanation, so, for the sake of our own sanity, we are trying to make ourselves believe that, until we can find a better theory. A sort of mental sea-anchor, you know."

"Couldn't a tidal wave have carried us back to the Azores?"

"Not a chance. I know every inch of those and this land is much too flat. I've never seen this place before."

"Well, for Pete's sake, let's tie a can on that cable and get over there where we can find out. This thing's driving me nuts."

"Steady, old man. The cable's gone. Disappeared. Suppose you try to raise someone on the radio. That should keep your mind occupied."

"That's an *idea*," and Larry thanked Bob with a quick smile as he darted toward the radio cabin.

THE Cerberus was gotten under way immediately and headed toward the shore. As they approached closer, frowning cliffs rose slowly on their haunches with bared teeth to greet them inhospitably; while growling breakers warned of hidden reefs and shoals. Bob, with the caution born of experience, altered the ship's course, while still well out, to one parallel to the forbidding coast-line and headed toward the glowing peak, that seemed to beckon like a harbor light in the distance.

At noon, Bob shot the sun and retired to the chart-room to figure his position. A few moments later, he approached Don Jim, a frown of uncertainty on his face.

"The mystery deepens," he said gravely. "According to my figures, I fix our position exactly where we were this morning, four hundred miles from land, but if that's a mirage then I'm an adagio dancer," and he shrugged helplessly, pointing to the shore.

"It's beautiful enough for a mirage but, having seen you dance, I am forced to accept its reality," replied Don Jim, his eyes twinkling. "Since navigation is not in my province, I am afraid I can't help you much."

"Well, don't tell Larry, yet. He's jittery enough as it is and I don't suppose that bang on the head has helped him any."

"Of course I won't. But don't worry about Larry. He will be all right. He's a good lad with perhaps too much imagination. But under the circumstances, I would suggest that we *all* hold a tight rein on our imaginations, at least, for the present."

"Sounds like good advice," agreed Bob, and he turned and made his way thoughtfully back to the bridge.

"Any luck?" he called to Larry as the latter came out of the radio cabin, a moment later.

"Not a whisper. Blew a transformer, I guess," Larry answered carelessly, walking over to the rail to join Don Jim, who was gazing landward through his glass in search of some sign of habitation or a possible landing place for the ship's launch.

"I didn't want to worry Bob at present," Larry told him in an undertone. "I tried the whole range and couldn't even pick up a short-wave signal, and traffic's always pretty heavy on that channel."

"Are you sure your equipment is all right. You know when Bob threw that switch—"

"No. The receiver's okay. It wasn't on at the time. I picked up heat static all right, but nary a signal. I tell you I'm beginning to feel that there's something spooky about this mess."

"Perhaps we are just in one of those 'dead spots' for radio," said Don Jim reassuringly. "I say, did you ever see such a gorgeous country?"

The vista was truly beautiful. Above the cliffs, rose low rolling hills, green with verdure; while occasional steep ravines offered more intimate glimpses of the tree-clad slopes beyond.

"No," answered Larry finally, "unless it was the Marquesas, but they're more mountainous than this, and damnably hot."

"The South Pacific is beyond my ken. A sort of wishful Paradise to which I have always hoped I might go," mused Don Jim. "But if this place resembles it, then this 'were Paradise enow'."

"Great Guns! You don't mean that we —" stammered Larry.

"Are marine angels, devoid of the grace of wings?" finished Don Jim laughing. "Hardly. I am far too much of an idealist to people my personal heaven with barefooted Swedish sailors and unshaven radio operators in dungarees. No, my friend, we are still in contact with the hard, material realism of the world, though in what part I can't say."

"Yes, I suppose you're right, at that," said Larry with a sheepish grin, "but I've had the willies ever since we picked up that hoodooed cable. I guess you think I'm a nut."

"It's the whimsical heritage of your Irish ancestry, Larry, and nothing of which to be ashamed, for that is the trait which has endeared your race to all the world."

Silence fell on the two men, thus embarrassed by so intimate a touch of friendship, but their musings were interrupted by the sudden cessation of the ship's engines.

"What's up?" queried Larry, looking up to find Bob leaning on the bridge rail, grinning down at them.

"A fine pair of lookouts you birds are. Look over there in that cove."

"You mean that ledge of rock? We saw that long ago—wait a minute! By George, it's a ship!"

"WAS a ship, would be more correct, Larry," said Don Jim, studying it through the glass.

"Yep," agreed the captain. "I thought we'd better go over to see what we can find. There might be a path up the cliffs there. See to the launch, will you, Larry, while I give Mr. Oleson his instructions. Better put in a few provisions, for we might do a little exploring if we find a path."

By the time Bob had given the mate his stand-by orders and the anchor had been dropped, the launch was ready. Joining his two companions, the trio set off for the wreck, which was now hidden by an intervening rocky point. Rounding this, the completeness of the ruin was revealed to them suddenly in all its grimness. Heeled over on the narrow beach, her superstructure half-buried in the sand, the shattered hulk lay bloating in the sun. Thick-caked rust bespoke of long exposure. Bob surveyed her with a quickly appraising eye.

"About four thousand tons, I should say. Cargo-boat by the cut of her."

"Cargoed by the long-abandoned hopes of disembodied spirits, now, I'll venture," said Don Jim.

Larry shivered.

"Lay off," he growled. "You give me the creeps."

Bob stole a quick glance at him, but withheld any comment.

They beached the boat and walked across the sand, past the stern of the wreck, to where they could get an unobstructed view of her tilted deck.

"A collier," said Bob, noting the wreckage of her deck machinery. Larry stood stock-still, his face paling with excitement, as he surveyed the ruin.

"It's—it's the *Cyclops!*" he gasped.

"What!"

"Yes."

Don Jim looked at the others, nonplussed at their very apparent amazement.

"I am afraid I am not very well versed in marine history," he commenced—

"Marine history, nothing!" exploded Bob. "This is *world* history! The *Cyclops* was a United States naval collier that disappeared without trace, from the North Atlantic during the World War—and in calm weather. Germany denied any knowledge of her sinking. It's one of the sea's greatest mysteries—but are you sure, Larry?"

"I'd know her anywhere. Didn't my old man serve two hitches on her? He was on her when she disappeared."

"But—"

"But, nothing! I was all over this old tub every time she docked at Brooklyn Navy Yard. Why, as a kid, I knew her better than I knew my own home. My God, can't you understand? Don't you see what it all means? We're dead, I tell you! All of us—dead!"

"I could almost be tempted to believe that myself," answered Bob soberly. "What with that cable business this morning, that baffling noon-fix, your radio failure, which didn't fool me, and now this."

Then he grinned.

"As an angel, Larry, I'm afraid you're a total loss."

"Yes," laughed Don Jim, "and where is the reception committee and the heavenly ticker tape? Furthermore, there is an old Spanish legend to the effect that the souls of lost sailormen always hover over the scene of their disaster."

Instinctively, Larry glanced upward. He gasped. His eyes almost bulged from their sockets.

"Mother of God!" he exclaimed in an awed whisper. "Look!"

There, not a hundred feet above their heads, circling on outstretched bat-like wings, five huge, grey shapes looked silently down upon them. *Their heads were those of human beings.*

Bob's hand flew to the automatic at his side. Jerking it up, he fired at the nearest creature. But, as he pulled the trigger, Larry struck his hand aside.

"You fool!" he cried. "Now we *are* sunk!"

With a weird cry, the winged monster dove full at them, dropped a round object and swirled upward in swift, soaring flight. The object struck at their feet, where it burst like a puff-ball. A pungent musty odor pervaded the air. Clouds of brownish dust rose to envelope them in a thick, soporific fog. Gasping for breath, Larry took two steps forward, fell, struggled to his knees and—slipped into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER III

LIVING OR DEAD?

LARRY'S mind woke before his body did. For several minutes, he lay listening to the sounds about him, queer shufflings, grunts, and squeals; while his brain swiftly reviewed the amazing events of the past few hours. Devoid of physical pain or fatigue, his body seemed curiously light; yet he felt a disinclination to move or change his position. He remembered a similar sensation when he had taken gas once in a dentist's office. The same sense of physical stagnation. Throwing off this lassitude, he opened his eyes and sat up. It was almost totally dark. What little light there was came from the stars that shone brightly overhead, but on a high horizon, well above his head, they were eclipsed by well-marked shadows, whose very density conveyed the impression of solidity. Close beside him, he made out two figures. Investigation proved them to be Bob and Don Jim, seemingly uninjured, but sleeping so profoundly he could not waken either of them.

Larry rose to his feet and ventured cautiously toward the nearest shadow. As he suspected, it was a wall of solid stone. Feeling his way along this, he soon covered three sides of the enclosure. As he approached the fourth side, from whence came the growls and scuffling, he encountered a palisade of strong wooden bars. He essayed to climb one of them, but, before he had made much headway, he slipped and fell back. One leg went through to the other side, where it struck a soft yielding body. Instantly, there came a howling snarl and his foot was seized in a grip that threatened to tear it off. Desperately using the leverage of his other leg against the bars, Larry tore his foot loose and dashed back to his companions. Frantically, he strove to rouse them and, finally succeeding, told them breathlessly of his encounter.

"And so, I presume we may consider ourselves captives, or at least prisoners," said Don Jim after a moment's silence. "That hardly fits in with your theory that we are dead, Larry. You would scarcely call this the accepted conception of heaven and I neither see nor smell the alternative fire-and-brimstone."

"But there's purgatory, isn't there? Haven't the padres told us that those who die in venial sin pass into purgatory and have to stay there until their friends pray them out? Why, last time I was home, I attended a special mass for poor old Jerry Conners, who died in his cups, God rest his soul. I guess there's nothing to be afraid of—just the long waiting....At that, it'll take a lot of prayers to save Bob, A. P. A. that *he* is."

"There may be some truth in what the lad says," said Bob, who had been lying on his back during this discussion. "I don't mean in the existence of an orthodox heaven, hell or purgatory, but wiser minds than ours have speculated on the possibility of life after death, on another plane. I've been studying the stars and, though I know the sky-charts backwards, I can't recognize a single constellation."

"That's the most convincing argument yet advanced," said Don Jim...."Bewildering though, isn't it? Yet, freed from the fear of a death already consummated, it offers the possibilities of a very interesting adventure." The sudden profundity of the whole idea halted further comment and left each silent with his own speculations.

Soon a gradual lightening of their surroundings told of the approach of dawn. As the light increased, it revealed to them the details of their prison. As Larry had surmised, they were in a small court surrounded by twenty-foot walls of solid masonry. Across the center of this, a ten foot fence of heavy wooden poles divided the area into two parts; while along the top of the fence, a vine of thick stems and ovate leaves had been trained. A gate led through the palisade to the opposite court, while on the far side of this, a massive door gave access to the outside. On the opposite side of the barrier, the trio observed a group of the most repulsive beings they had ever seen. Dark-skinned, hairy and devoid of all clothing, they lay huddled in one corner; arms, legs and bodies intermingled in one indescriminate heap, as though for warmth. Those on the outside were continually squirming their way into the pile, drawing grunts and growls of protest from the unfortunates thus displaced. These were the sounds the three companions had heard during the hours of darkness.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Larry in disgust. "I thought the Patagonian Indians were the

lowest form of humanity I had ever seen, but they were a flock of boudoir-lizards alongside of this scum."

"They're like a small chapter from the book, 'One Hundred Million Guinea-Pigs'," said Don Jim. "I don't suppose we will get much information from them. Do you think so, Bob?"

"Just a moment. Let me get this," said Bob, who had been studying the wall intently above the door. Following his gaze, the other two saw a tablet set into the wall, just over the lintel. It was covered by deeply-carved hieroglyphics.

"What is it?" asked Larry. "Don't tell me that you can read that junk. It looks like a Chinese lottery ticket."

"I believe I can—at least, part of it. Those characters so closely resemble the Egyptian writings that I'm sure I recognize some of them. There is a reference to a 'sacred mountain,' and farther down I think I can make out something about a 'sea or river of life'. See there, near the middle—those two parallel wavy lines. Don't bother me and I'll see if I can't make some sense of it."

TENSELY the others waited, but after a time, Bob was forced to admit his defeat, saying: "I'm afraid it's beyond me. I didn't realize how much I had forgotten. If I had my books here—but I haven't, so beyond that it's some sort of dedication, I don't make much of it. But I'd give my right leg to meet some inhabitant of this place with the intelligence to explain how it came to be there."

"A rather improvident statement," said Don Jim, "for unless I am mistaken, here comes the answer to your prayers."

The ponderous door had swung quickly open and closed again, to admit a figure so different from the groveling caricatures of humanity in the corner, as to seem godlike by comparison. Well above medium height, he stood, supple body proudly erect, the clear skin glowing red in the morning sunshine. Not the tawny bronze of the American Indian, but rather, the soft mellow glow of burnished copper. Wavy jet black hair fell almost to his shoulders, framing a ruggedly handsome face of kindly aspect. A short kilted skirt of soft red fabric fell from the waist half-way to the left knee, but was cut away on the right side, leaving most of the thigh uncovered. A single wide shoulder-strap passed diagonally from the belt, across the breast and over the left shoulder. Heelless sandals of beautifully plaited straw, barely covering the heels, but rising half-way up the shins and heavily decorated in ornate design, were on his feet.

As though his entrance were a signal, the occupants of the outer court rose in a body and, shrieking, hurled themselves savagely toward him. Instantly, the red one raised a slender wand from his side, which he pointed at the oncoming horde. On its tip there was twined a fragment of the same vine that grew along the top of the barricade. The effect was startling. Cringing with fear, the bestial creatures dropped to the ground and scuttled back to their corner, where they huddled cowering; yet watchfully belligerent. With a few sharply uttered gutturals to them, which they answered with menacing growls, their conqueror then approached the inner gate.

Bob, his mind still upon the problem of the carved tablet, rose and advanced to meet him, so that, as the latter stepped through the gate, he looked up startled to find himself confronted by the stalwart young sea captain, at scarcely arm's length. With a gasp of surprise, he thrust forward the wand. Impatiently, Bob reached up to brush it aside, but as his hand came in contact with the leaves of the vine, he cried out in anguish and slumped to the ground where he rolled in agony.

The craftiest of the brute-creatures, noting that the gate was still ajar, darted forward with the stealthy agility of a beast of prey and, with a cry of triumph, hurled himself through it and upon the now unprotected back of his former master. One hairy arm went about the throat, while the other was forced into the small of the back. Slowly the head was drawn backward. Under that terrific leverage, it would be but a matter of seconds until the spine was snapped.

Without questioning the age-old instinct that prompts the intelligent to aid a fellow being from the brute, Don Jim sprang to the rescue. It was a vain gesture, for, without loss of his advantage, the beast shifted up one knee to replace the arm pressing into his victim's back and, seizing Don Jim, held him easily at arm's length, helpless.

The sight of his friend thus imperiled roused Larry from the bewildered daze that the mystifying phantasmagoria of the past

twenty-four hours had induced. With a roar of rage, he sprang to his feet and delivered a business-like navy upper-cut flush on the point of the creature's jaw, knocking him completely through the open gate. Yelling at the other brutes, now pushing forward, he slammed the gate in their faces and shot the bolt. They hurled themselves against it, but after a few quick thrusts of the red one's wand, quickly retired leaving two of their number writhing on the ground.

Larry would have then sprung upon the stranger, but Don Jim restrained him, pointing to Bob, who was now rising to his feet, dazed, but unharmed. The red one turned toward them.

"Thank you," he said with a quick smile.

"It was nothing," began Don Jim, then stopped in sheer amazement.

The red man had spoken in purest Basque, to which Don Jim had answered instinctively.

"YOU are—?" began the red one questioningly.

"I am a Basque," replied Don Jim, "and my friends here are from America. And you?"

"I am Juan Ennrai, captain of the Gaztik guard. But this Am— This place of which you speak. Where does it lie?"

"To the west," replied Don Jim pointing.

"The great land beyond the setting sun?" cried the other in growing excitement.

Don Jim nodded.

Juan Ennrai's face glowed with rapturous wonder. "At last! At last!" he cried. "The way is open."

"But how does it happen that you speak a language so closely resembling our Eskuara?" asked Don Jim.

"I know nothing of your Eskuara, but there is no time for explanations now. Some of the Burogoi will be here shortly. Trust me, and if you value your lives, let me have your clothing. You must pretend to be Gaztik," and he pointed to the groveling beasts beyond the fence.

Dom Jim turned to his companions and repeated the command.

"What! Understudy those Frankensteins! Not while I'm sober," growled Larry.

"We had best be guided by his judgment," answered Don Jim. "He, at least, seems friendly."

Quickly, they stripped and handed their clothes to the impatiently waiting guard, who received them with a smile in which relief and reassurance were intermingled.

"Remember, speak to no one and, above all, show no sign of intelligence," he cautioned, and in a moment, had passed beyond the outer door.

"What's it all about?"

"Where are we?"

"Who was his nibs and how the devil could you talk his lingo?"

Don Jim smiled. "Cease firing," he pleaded. "Beyond the fact that his name is Juan Ennrai and that he is captain of some sort of guard, I learned but little, except that we are to have some visitors soon and, unless we emulate our friends on the other side of the fence, our lives are in danger. And that ruins your theory, Larry, as, you see, we still have lives to lose."

"Aw, you birds know I was just kidding," suggested Larry hopefully, while the other two tried to hide their grins. "Did this 'John Henry' say he would help us out of here?"

"Well, not in so many words, but his manner—Sh-h! Here comes the inspection committee. Act dumb and don't talk."

CHAPTER IV

THE WINGED MAN

THE group that now entered numbered seven. Led by Juan Ennrai, there followed three more in similar dress, although the ornamentation on their sandals was less elaborate. Ostensibly, these were members of the guard. Behind them came two figures clad in full-flowing white robes, on the breasts of which were embroidered in blue the symbol of the two wavy parallel lines, which Bob had noticed on the tablet, surmounted by discs of yellow. There was about them the air of haughty arrogance that goes with supreme authority.

The appearance of the final member of the party caused a shiver to run up Larry's spine. Fully ten feet in height, with a huge, barrel-like chest, he strode along on legs so strong and attenuated that they reminded Larry of those of a monstrous crane. The feet were broad and flat, the wide-spread toes webbed and taloned. The elbows, hanging by his sides, reached well below the waist, with the bent forearms

returning almost to the shoulders, while the hands and fingers were so long that they were folded across the mammoth chest. From wrists to shoulders, hung loose folds of thick membranous tissue, shrouding their owner like a cloak. The massive shoulders supported a thick neck surmounted by a rather a small head, whose dominant features were a pair of glittering yellow eyes. With skin a uniform, dull-grey, this strange creature was unclothed except for a stout leather harness about the shoulders, from which there depended a single piece of coarse netting caught in at the waist by several turns of heavy leather thong. Beyond question, here was one of the flying creatures who had attacked them in the cove.

Larry, staring open-mouthed, was about to speak when a sudden nudge from Don Jim brought him memory of the warning. He immediately assumed the pose of guarded indifference adopted by the others, as they watched the approach of their captors.

When the party halted before them, the three appeared so docile that the guards moved to one side, allowing the two white-robed figures to step forward. After a cursory examination, one of these turned upon the winged-creature and spoke angrily: "What means this, Amoziz? These are but Gaztik—and poor specimens, at that."

"But, Father of All Wisdom," began the flying man apologetically, in a thin piping voice, "they were not thus un—"

At this point Jaun Ennrai prodded Larry roughly with his foot. Larry responded with a growl so menacing and malevolent as to put the genuine Gaztik to shame. Instantly, the wands of the guards shot out at the trio, who scrambled back to the wall where they huddled in fear, that in Bob's case, at least, was not all simulated. During this diversion, a look of meaning passed from the guard captain to the bird-man.

"Well, Amoziz, you were saying—" prompted the white-robed one, breaking in on the silence that followed.

"I was mistaken, Intelligence," piped the flying-creature.

"What!" exclaimed the other furiously. "Are the meditations of the Twenty to be so lightly interrupted by tales of armed invasion? And what of the great 'fire raft'? Is that also just a mistake?"

"Pardon, most worthy Mentality," interrupted Juan Ennrai, "Amoziz undoubtly had reference to the wreckage of the metal galley, and in his zeal—"

"Zeal! Since when has zeal become confused with carelessness? For this lapse, his life's span shall be shortened by two full sun-cycles. And who are you, my noble captain, to defend him? It has recently come to the ears of the Twenty that you are but luke warm to the Basilean doctrines and have expressed ideas slightly verging on Hesperianism. Beware, fellow, or you shall take your place among the Gaztik. But come, we've wasted time enough."

As soon as they had gone, Don Jim quickly explained to the others what had transpired.

"Well," said Bob at last, "I don't know where we are, but I must admit I've never been in a tougher spot."

"Yes, you could hardly call the outlook a bright one," responded Don Jim. "About our only ray of hope is the apparent friendliness of Juan Ennrai."

"But how about this bird-guy?" suggested Larry.

"Amoziz?"

"Yeah, 'Moses'. That's the one. To think I took him for an angel, the big pelican.—Say! That would make him 'Holy Moses'.—But didn't you say he wouldnt' squeal on us after he got the high sign from John Henry—and he took a rap for it?"

"That's true. Perhaps the situation is not as bad as it might appear, if we have two friends at court. It might be well to await a further conference with this 'John Henry', as you call him, before making any plan of action. While first impressions are often dangerous standards, I admit a certain liking for that lad. He is what the British term 'sporting'. That means a 'good scout' in your language, Larry."

"Why pick on me?" bridled Larry. "I'm no unilinguist and I understand English, if I don't speak it."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Bob laughing. "Unilinguist'. That puts you one up on the Professor, Larry. And right down his own alley, too."

"I walked right into that one, didn't I?" observed Don Jim drily. "I deserved it, for I should know that Larry's brains are not all in his fists. Which reminds me, I have forgotten to thank you, Larry, for your timely rescue."

"Aw nuts!" growled Larry. "Besides, I wanted to poke someone anyway, when I saw Bob go down. What was in that stick, anyhow, to knock you out like that?"

"TNT, white mule and chain lightning," answered Bob ruefully, rubbing his arm in remembrance.

AS the day advanced, the sun increased its warmth, causing them to seek the shadows of the high walls. When noon approached, they moved to the southern side of the enclosure and discovered that, over the opposite wall, they had an excellent view of the snow-capped mountain they had previously noted. At closer range, it did not appear so lofty as it had in the distance, and what they had taken for snow proved to be a magnificent, white stone edifice that covered the entire summit of the peak. Pyramidal in form, it rose sharply to culminate in a many-columned building of equisite line and beauty.

"The headman's shanty," speculated Larry.

"Perhaps," answered Don Jim, "but from its location, I would be more inclined to believe it to be a temple of worship."

"Might be, at that," agreed Larry, "Heathens always do put their temples on the high places. Sort of meeting God halfway."

Shortly after, several guards appeared bearing great haunches of raw meat and some strange bulbous fruit, which they tossed carelessly on the ground and departed. With the unspoken consent of the others, Larry picked up the evil-smelling meat and tossed it disgustedly over the barricade to the snarling Gaztik. The gourd-like fruit they retained, however, for each contained a pint of clear cool water.

As the long afternoon passed with no sign from Juan Ennrai, the spirits of the prisoners sank lower. Darkness, with its attendant chill on their unclad bodies, added further discomfort. Larry growled, Bob became silent and even Don Jim's heartening philosophy took on a ring of artificiality.

When they had about given up hope and were preparing to spend the night huddled together for warmth, the outer gate opened and Jaun Ennrai entered with a small group of Gaztik. These he herded through to the inner court and into a corner and, tossing three long cloaks to the prisoners, silently motioned them to follow him. He led them out through several walled passages and, without encountering anyone, they finally emerged into a wide street paved with huge blocks of stone and flanked by many large and beautiful buildings.

"Now aint that somethin'," said Larry with a sigh of relief.

Instantly, their guide clapped a hand over his mouth and gestured for silence. Too late. From a doorway opposite, two guards stepped forward, challenging them sharply. The party halted and stood awaiting their approach. Just as the foremost had about reached them, Juan thrust out one arm and from his hand there darted a sheet of flame, which enveloped the guard, who dropped in his tracks, his clothes but smouldering ashes upon him.

At the sight of his comrade's fate, the other guard, uttering a sound like a shrill strident whistle, turned and ran down the street. Plunging like a quarter-back, Bob tackled him cleanly around the knees. Crashing to the ground, his head striking hollowly on the paving, the guard lay motion less. Quickly, Juan was over him. Motioning Bob back, he raised his hand and once again the hissing flame shot out leaving only a smoking wreckage.

But now, from both ahead and behind, came answering whistles and the distant thud of many running feet.

"Stand by, the *Cerberus,*" yelled Larry. "Here come the leather-necks. Don Jim, tell your boy friend to oil up his fireworks. . . . We're going to need them."

Juan Ennrai, sensing Larry's sanguinary enthusiasm, patted him on the shoulder, but smilingly shook his head and pointed upward.

Coming slowly through the gloom, were five great winged shapes, and from each there dangled a sling of netting at the end of a leather thong.

"Quick! Follow me!" called Juan and, grasping one of the slings, he swung himself into it and was instantly whisked aloft.

"Hot dog! Moses to the rescue!" cried Larry, as Don Jim caught the next sling, to be immediately followed by the other two.

After a swift ascent, the birdmen headed toward the temple-crowned mountain, whose ghostly outline was just discernible in the darkness. Don Jim looked up at the leather thong and shuddered. That narrow strip of tanned hide, which now looked so inadequate, was all that stood between him and a horrible death a thousand feet below. He looked down. Stretching away

on all sides, lay a vast sleep-ridden city. It reminded him of a sight-seeing trip he had taken one night over New York in a dirigible. But, then the darkness had been punctured by a million twinkling lights; while here, only an occasional soft illumination bespoke of wakeful souls.

He forgot his giddiness in the beauty of the scene. Immediately below, a mighty waterway, crossed by numerous bridges, intersected the city, and far ahead he could make out a second one. But these could not be rivers, for their uniform widths and straight banks would indicate an artificial origin. Evidently, engineering principles were not unknown to these strange people.

As they approached the second canal, the birdmen dropped lower and circled slowly over the flat roof of a large building. Skimming along just above its surface, Juan Ennrai swung lightly from his sling and alighted with the ease that told of long practice. Don Jim tried to emulate him, but the sting of the hard roof on his bare feet told him that his timing was poor. Bob fared somewhat better, but Larry misjudged entirely and, after bumping twice, was carried up for another round. This time he landed on his feet, but as one arm was still entangled in the netting, he was thrown and dragged toward the low wall that surrounded the roof. Just as it seemed that he would undoubtedly go over, he managed to extricate himself and, jumping to his feet, he thumbed his nose at the retreating birdmen. The fading sound of high-pitched laughter floated back derisively.

Jaun Ennrai stood by the parapet gazing searchingly out over the city as the others joined him. Reassured that there was no sign of pursuit, he opened a small door in the wall, disclosing a narrow stairway leading down into the building. Stepping in, he signed the rest to follow.

"What is this place?" asked Don Jim, pointing out over the darkened city.

"Atlantis," answered Jaun briefly over his shoulder.

CHAPTER V

THE MYTHOLOGICAL TRUTH

ATLANTIS!

The mythical lost continent of the ancients! Legendary mistress of the antediluvian seas! The mighty seat of a civilization so lost in antiquity that its very existence had become but fabled lore! Here! Now! Surrounding him! The immensity of the thought so bewildered him that Don Jim could only follow his guide, dumb with amazement; vaguely conscious, from Bob's benumbed expression, that he, too, had caught the full import of that single, spoken word. As they entered a lighted room, Don Jim was startled from his daze by Larry's agonized whisper.

"Holy Cats! Dames—and me in a kimono!"

Two young women arose and stood momentarily surveying the intruders. Then the taller advanced to meet them, as though in greeting.

"My sister," announced Juan Ennrai, then he turned to her. "And now, Anika, having seen them with your own eyes, you will perhaps believe that they are not Gaztik, but beings of an intelligence equal to our own."

"Which is he that speaks our tongue?" asked the girl.

Suddenly conscious that he and his companions were staring, open-mouthed, Don Jim flushed and then bowed to cover his embarrassment. "By some quirk of fate, that fortunate privilege is mine," he said. "I hope you will pardon our very apparent bewilderment, but to be so suddenly set down in the midst of a land whose one-time existence has been doubted for centuries—"

"What?" interrupted Juan Ennrai, his own amazement matching that of his guests. "Atlantis doubted? Are there no records? Then, whence were you bound? Did you dare venture across the time-waves without a definite destination?"

"Please, Juan," exclaimed Anika, "our guests will think us lacking in hospitality. Marza," she continued, turning to her maid, "bring food and wine and, remember, disclosure of what is occuring here means death to all of us."

"The Burogoi shall turn me Gaztik first," said the girl, as she left the room.

"Won't you tell us who you are?" asked Anika, smiling at Don Jim.

"Pray pardon my confusion, I fear I have forgotten my manners. These, my friends Robert Clarke and Larry Carmichael, are Americans; while I am a Basque, by name, Don Jaimie Iruzaldia."

"Iruzaldia," pondered Juan. "I have heard that name before. Where was it, Anika?"

"That was the ancient title of the driver of the imperial chariot. Your ancestors, Don Jaimie, must have been of great nobility to bequeath you such a name, but your large friend's name is beyond my poor tongue to master, for never have I heard a word with such a beginning."

"That establishes a further connection between our languages, then," answered Don Jim, "for we have no words beginning with 'R' in Eskuara. However, the captain is called 'Bob' by his friends."

"Bob. Yes, that is better. Now the name of the other, he of the copper-colored hair, rolls easily off my tongue—Larry."

A flush rose beneath the deep tan of Larry's face as he heard his name from her smiling lips.

"See," cried Anika, laughing gayly, "he has the same blue eyes and now his color matches my complexion. Surely, he has the makings of a true Atlantean."

The entrance of Marza with the food at this juncture put a stop to further conversation, while the trio broke their long fast; their hosts looking on, no doubt marveling at such appetites. But even the famished have their limits, so presently Don Jim looked up with a high of satisfaction.

"That's better," he said. "Now, perhaps we can settle our mutual perplexity."

"I have been thinking," said Jaun, "that possibly the best approach would be for you to tell us what you know of Atlantis, and Anika, who is in full charge of all Atlantean historical records, can bring your knowledge of our land up to the present. Then, if you will tell us how you arrived at this time-wave, we shall be able to plan to keep the way opened."

"I don't understand your reference to the 'time-wave', but the rest sounds like a logical sequence so, if you will pardon me as I occasionally explain as much as I can to my companions as we go, I will try to make my story brief.

"THE most complete, and just about the only, reference to Atlantis in our history is that which appears in an early Greek drama, which was written about twenty-three centuries ago by an Athenean philosopher named Plato. One of his characters repeats a tale told to his grandfather, a hundred years previously, by a priest of Egypt. The tale describes a vast continent which had existed some nine thousand years before, off the Pillars of Hercules, which we call Gibraltar, in the Atlantic Ocean. This priest told of a mighty nation whose civilization was so far advanced that they had conquered all the peoples of the European and North African mainlands bordering on the Mediterranean, or great inland sea. Its many colonies covered all the then-known world and all the cultures of the present races had their beginning in the Atlantean teachings.

"At the very height of its omnipotence, Atlantis, drunk with power, began to oppress and tyranize its vassal colonies. A number of them, under the leadership of the Hellenes, the war-like progenitors of the Greek nation, rose in rebellion and were so successful that they not only drove their oppressors from the mainland, but actually started to invade Atlantis itself. On the very eve of this attack, a great cataclysm destroyed Atlantis and the entire continent, with its people, arts, culture and buildings, sank beneath the waves of the great ocean, which to this day bears its name.

"Plato's account met with scant belief in his day, but in later years, many rose in its defense and supplemented it with controversial points in its favor. During the last century, science has joined the scoffers, so that today, there are but few who hold that Atlantis could ever have existed. I, myself, have always deemed it merely a legend."

AS Don Jim finished, the Atlanteans sat for a moment in silence, then Jaun said thoughtfully: "It seems strange that a glory so widespread should vanish so utterly from the face of the planet and from the memories of men."

"Perhaps," replied Anika, "the Hellenes, thwarted in their vengeance, destroyed our remaining works and effaced all our inscriptions from their records."

"I am not so sure," interposed Don Jim. "There are many hieroglyphs in the world as yet undeciphered. And Bob, who is an authority on the subject, nearly succeeded in interpreting one of yours in our prison this morning. But, please," he continued to Anika, "won't you try to relieve us of the mental strain of all this mystery? It amounts almost to torture."

"Of course," she answered contritely, "how thoughtless of me! Well, our be-

ginning is as legendary as your own. Poseidon, whose origin is veiled in mystery, was alleged to be the founder of Atlantis and was looked upon as a god, ruling over the kingdom of the sea, by the aboriginal inhabitants of our continent. They worshiped him as such for many ages. Uranus was the first king, for he gathered the scattered tribes together, teaching them to dwell in cities and to till the soil. No one knows from whence he came, but his knowledge was vast and he taught the people many things. He married Titea, the most beautiful woman of all the aboriginal tribes. She bore him forty-five children, who were known as Titans. Titea died young for those days, and her eldest child, a daughter, Basilea, reared the rest of the brood. Upon the death of Uranus, Basilea succeeded him and became known as the Great Mother, or the Mother of the Earth. To her all nature was most beautiful. She married her brother, Hyperion, bearing him a son and a daughter, Helio and Selene. Hyperion's brothers slew him because of his regal ambitions and drowned Helio. Selene leaped to her death from a cliff. Basilea went insane and wandered about the land looking for her children, finally disappearing in a great storm.

"The ten eldest sons of Uranus, the Titans, then divided the kingdom among themselves. The twins, Atlas and Gadir, took the main continent, the others taking the lesser islands. Atlas, being the wisest, headed the yearly conferences of the ten kings, held in the temple, which you have no doubt seen, on the summit of Mount Olympuzan, and carried the cares and troubles of the entire world on his shoulders."

At this point Don Jim, unable to contain himself with excitement, interrupted Anika's recital and rapidly translated her story to Bob and Larry. Before he had finished, Bob's excitement had surpassed that of Don Jim.

"Why, here it is!" he cried. "The very source of all mythology! Neptune, Uranus, Atlas, Gadir—another name for Saturn—, even the original Mount Olympus! It's wonderful! Marvelous!"

"Well," said Larry dryly, "it certainly looks like all Bob's Greek ghosts were coming back to haunt him....Here, Hebe," picking up the wine jar and handing it to Marza, "see if you can rustle up a little more nectar."

"Oho!" laughed Bob, "the boy knows something about Greeks himself."

"Yeah, I gotta few good phone numbers," and Larry grinned.

"Atlas had seven daughters," resumed Anika, "Maia, Electra, Taygeta, Halcyone, Celaena and two others whose names for some reason are not recorded. To these he gave the various colonies he had established on the great mainland to the east. His son, Hesperus, became an astronomer and scientist and established a great scientific priesthood. During some experiments, in which he was attempting to bring down the lightnings from the heavens, his observatory, on the top of Mount Atlas, in the land that bordered the southern shore of the great inland sea, was struck by lightning and Hesperus disappeared. Later, his body was discovered on a ledge of a cliff, being devoured by two great eagles. Basilea is said to have reappeared at this time and warned the priesthood from interferring further with the laws of nature.

"Gadir, the king of Eastern Atlantis, married one of his sisters who bore him a son, Jupiter. On reaching manhood, Jupiter deposed his father, who then called on the Titans to come to his aid, but Jupiter overthrew them all and conquered the world, taking possession of the temple on Mount Olympuzan. Then followed centuries of expansion, with the establishment of colonies in all parts of the world; while Atlantis rose to glory and science under the Hesperian priesthood.

"Copper deposits do not occur anywhere in Atlantis, so the increasing demands for this metal, made by the Hesperians on the colonies, perhaps, worked a hardship on the latter. Finally, the colonies, as your philosopher has told you, rose in revolt. For several years, the Atlanteans held this rebellion in check, but when the fierce Hellenes joined the insurrection, they were driven back until they were forced to leave the mainland entirely. The triumphant rebels, flushed with victory, then turned their thoughts to conquest and, seizing all available vessels, set sail to invade Atlantis.

"Now the Hesperians had made a very important discovery and, with perhaps just such an emergency in mind, had prepared to use it. The discovery was this: Hitherto it was believed that time traveled in a straight continuous flow, like a stream, and were it possible to travel in time, one could



The birdman took Anika to safety, first.

go back into the past or ahead into the future. This premise was proved to be in error, for they determined that time is an energy and really travels in a series of waves, similar to those of heat and light, but infinitely longer. Further study showed that the world and its attendant universe were traveling along upon the crest of one of these waves, and any attempt to travel ahead or back would only put the experimenter in an entirely different existence on the crest of a different time-wave. Distortion of time between the wave crests makes existence there impossible.

"Many Hesperians fled from the invasion of the Hellenes to the great land to the west, but some of the priests remained in Atlantis and, through the use of a chain of solar generators, which surrounded the continent and were linked together by a great cable, transported the entire continent bodily to the following time-wave. The time-wave upon which we rest today."

CHAPTER VI

THE TIME-WAVE

"AND to think," said Bob, when Don Jim had finished translating, "that there is really a foundation of fact behind mythology. No wonder the legends have withstood the test of time and come down to us almost intact. Jupiter! The war with the Titans! Even Prometheus, although he turns out to be Hesperus, after all. It's perfect!"

"Yeah, it's even colossal," put in Larry, "if you'll pardon my Hollywood accent."

"But this business of the 'time-waves'," said Bob, squelching Larry with a look, "I don't quite get that."

"Aw, they do it with mirrors," retorted Larry. Bob lunged toward him threateningly, but Don Jim laid a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"I think I grasp the general theory," he interposed seriously, though his eyes were twinkling. "Not enough to attempt an explanation, however. Possibly, Anika can explain in more detail."

"Really," answered Anika, as he put this request, "Jaun is far better fitted to supply you with that information than I. Although I long ago embraced the tenets of Hesperianism, my duties as historian have prevented a very extensive study of it."

"Oh, the time principles are not at all difficult to understand," declared Jaun. "First, time must be mentally associated with the rays, or waves, of energy with which you are no doubt familiar."

"You mean the cosmic, gamma, light, heat, X-rays and radio waves?"

"I do not know them by those names, except those of heat and light, but I assume you are naming them in their order from the shortest, which come from outer space."

"Yes. The cosmic rays. They are at the lower end of our scale, but at the other end, beyond the waves of radio, there is a tremendous range as yet unexplored by us."

"Then the time-waves must lie in that region of your scale, for they are waves of prodigious length. All it was necessary for our ancestors to do was to surround Atlantis with a cable of a sufficient number of turns, or coils, to attune it to the following time-wave, supply the electrical energy and, instantly, it moved into this other plane of existence."

"But how," asked Bob, when Don Jim had passed on this explanation, "did we move back in time without reliving our yesterdays?"

"That's the disadvantage of a classical education," said Larry in disgust. "There isn't any yesterday, or tomorrow either, you dope. Quit trying to figure this thing out by differential calculus and get down to something practical; for instance. . . . radio. Here's old Mother Earth perched on a time-wave nine million meters long, listening to a permanent signal, say—like a twenty-four hour station. You don't like the music, so you change your own personal tuning to eight million meters and land in the middle of a tooth-paste program, but old Ma Earth goes right along, just the same, on nine million meters, still listening to the Crosby records."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Don Jim laughing. "A doctor of philosophy, with the entire alphabet after his name, couldn't have been more explicit."

"Okay, Larry. You win," said Bob. "I begin to get it now. The music in your analogy is synonymous to the various existences upon their corresponding planes."

"Sure. Just as simple as A B C—or a quadratic equation, if that's any easier for *you*. But what I want to know is, how come Moses and the rest of those canaries?"

"Right. There are a lot of things not covered by this time-wave theory," and Don Jim turned once more to the Atlanteans.

"SINCE Kukulkanus, the reigning king at the time of the invasion," resumed Anika, "fled with many others over the great western sea, a few of the most powerful of the Hesperian priests, on their arrival on this time-wave, took over the control of Atlantis. This was the cause of much jealousy and envy among the remainder of the priesthood. Combining their forces, these latter established a new cult which they called Basileanism, in honor of the Great Mother of ancient times. Their creed was anti-scientific and advocated Basilea's plea of non-interference with the laws of nature.

"After years of internecine struggle, the Basileans overthrew the followers of Hesperus and set up their own priesthood. It soon became apparent, even to the Basileans, that under their rule the people were fast slipping back into barbarism. Indeed, many did revert to a savage state and became Gaztik, or wild men, roaming the great plains-country in bands. Then came a great formative period of experimentation, which finally culminated in what is still the present Basilean doctrine; namely, that all things necessary for the welfare of mankind can be produced by nature.

"Discovery, at this time, of a method of speeding up the growth of body and plant cells, placed in the hands of the Basileans a means of backing up their doctrine—by means of forced evolution. By applying the rapid-cell growth method to man, it was found that his life could be speeded up from birth, through maturity, to old age in a period of five years.

"Using a group of Gaztik for the experiment, one of the first, and perhaps the most useful, developments started was the Kapeta, or flying-man. This group, through several hundred generations, were compelled to spend their whole accelerated lives running about on tiptoe, flapping their arms in simulated flight. With the years, their bodies grew lighter; their height increased; their arms became longer, chests larger and back muscles more powerful; and the webs of their armpits finally spread until they formed membranous wings. Eventually the first crude flights were made. The species now being safely established, it was time to return them to their natural life's span and educate them. The Kapetik were born. Constant flying over hundreds of centuries, has brought them to that state of perfection at which they are today—the chief mode of transportation in Atlantis.

"As the formulated knowledge of biology was advanced, the needs of man were supplied. Food, heat, shelter, even artificial light were provided by natural means. The light within this room is supplied by greatly enlarged photogenic cells of certain marine animalculae, artificially fed and nourished. Heating is furnished by the decomposition of waste materials, hastened and deodorized by the introduction of certain fung and bacteria."

"That bit of vine on your wand is most likely a highly cultivated variety of stinging nettle, then?" asked Don Jim of Jaun.

"Yes, like the one you saw growing along the top of the barricade in your late prison. Also, Amoziz tells me that he effected your capture by the use of the metto, which is a fungoid puff-ball whose spores have a harmless anesthetic property."

"But the flame with which you killed the guards?"

"Free oxygen, electrically ignited in a fire-proof tube. It is a Hesperian weapon and, consequently, frowned on by the Basileans; penalty for its possession is death or else being turned into a Gazta. But go on, Anika, I am anticipating your narrative."

"The Basileans eventually worked out a system of government in which the Burogoi, or Committee of Twenty, ruled supreme. These offices are held for life, unless a member is removed by unanimous vote of his fellows, and upon the death of one, his successor is named by the rest. Such absolutism could only lead to tyranny and soon the former Hesperians began to reorganize secretly, with hope of eventually returning Atlantis to its rightful place on its former time-wave. This plot was exposed prematurely and the Burogoi put the leaders to death, destroyed their laboratories and, seizing all the copper in the land, cast it into the sea; thereby closing the gate to the other world, effectually and permanently.

"The Hesperians, discouraged but unbeaten, have kept their knowledge and traditions secretly alive through the ages, pinning their one hope on those Hesperians who fled from the Hellenes to the western land. Someday, perhaps their de-

scendants might cross the time-wave and open the way.

"Several years ago, we thought our patience had been rewarded, for some of the Kapetik reported a huge metal vessel off the coast, manned by human beings. The vessel was wrecked in a storm, and later the searching parties found that the survivors had been killed by the Gaztik. At least, that was the report given out by the Burogoi, though certain evidence pointed to the Burogoi, themselves."

"Why, the murdering devils!" muttered Larry when he heard this part of the story. "Maybe my old man was one of—"

A SOUND from outside interrupted him and Amoziz strode into the room. Jaun presented him to Don Jim, who in turn introdubed Bob and Larry. The winged-man's greetings were both cordial and courteous, but when he came to Larry, he grinned so slyly that Larry had no doubt whose passenger he had been. However, Amoziz's mood changed quickly to one of seriousness as turned again to Jaun.

"The small boat has been safely hidden, but the Burogoi are suspicious," he said. "The slaying of those guards with the flame-tube has aroused them and they are secretly investigating."

"I was afraid of that," answered Jaun, "but in those circumstances I had no choice."

"I believe I am also suspected," continued Amoziz, "for, while they have ordered five scouting patrols along the coast for the morning, my patrol is not among them."

"Great Heavens! The *Cerberus!*" cried Don Jim. "It's certain to be spotted," and he repeated his fears to Bob.

"I believe we could fix that," declared the latter. "Why couldn't Amoziz carry one of us back to the ship in the darkness? Then we could sail her out of sight of land before daylight. Ask him if he can find her in the dark, Don Jim."

With Amoziz's assurance that this would be simple, it was decided that, after transmitting the orders to Mr. Oleson, the messenger was to return with the parts to a small radio set, in order to keep in communication with the *Cerberus* at all times. This plan pleased the Atlanteans who, though they were unfamiliar with radio, soon grasped its general principles.

"All right, Larry, you're elected," decided Bob.

"Not me," cried Larry with alacrity. "I'll do my straphanging in the subway."

Jaun and Don Jim soon convinced him that his previous flight had been an emergency one and that this time he could ride close-up under the expansive chest of the bird-man. On learning that he would not have to make his own landing, Larry reluctantly agreed and the whole party ascended to the roof to witness the take-off.

Starting well back on the roof, Amoziz ran swiftly forward, his wings flapping mightily. As his pace increased, his long skinny legs rose and fell like pistons in an effect so ludicrous that, but for an admonishing sign from Jaun, Bob and Don Jim would have burst into peals of laughter. Soon the great wings caught and, with powerful strokes, the bird-man rose swiftly, circled once, allowing Larry to deliver an impolite parting gesture from his lofty perch, and disappeared in the darkness.

Just as the party on the roof were about to descend to sleep out the few remaining hours of the night, a rush of sound caused them to glance aloft. High above their heads, several huge shadows passed swiftly and vanished in the gloom, in the direction taken by Amoziz and Larry. Anika gasped.

"What is it?" asked Don Jim in an awed whisper.

"The Kapetik patrol," answered Jaun.

"Do you suppose they saw them?"

"I don't know," answered the Atlantean in slowly measured tones.

CHAPTER VII

CAN THE WORLD "TAKE IT"?

WHEN Bob and Don Jim awoke the next morning, they found that the clothes, which they had surrendered to Jaun in the Gaztik prison, had been freshly cleaned and placed beside their couches while they slept. Relieved to resume their accustomed garb, they laid aside the red cloaks, in which they had felt so out of character, and reentered the room of their conference the night before. Jaun and Anika were awaiting them beside the breakfast table. They, too, had discarded their cloaks, which were evidently worn only

as a protection against the chill of the Atlantean evenings.

Anika, clad in a costume similar to Jaun's, seemed unconscious of the inordinate amount of beautiful figure which her scanty attire revealed. She was, however, aware of Bob's glances of abashed admiration, without knowing the exact cause. She greeted them with a charming smile and soon became engaged in a lively conversation with Bob, which tested Don Jim's powers of translation to the utmost. In contrast, Jaun seemed to be in a somber mood and spoke but little during the meal. At last, with an affectionate smile at his sister, he said:

"If you can spare the services of your interpreter, Anika, I would like to inquire as to the manner of his arrival in Atlantis. He has not told us yet."

"Quite right. I had forgotten," said Don Jim apologetically, and quickly related their adventures up to the discovery of the "Cyclops." "So you see," he said in conclusion, "our coming was purely accidental and without plan on our part."

Jaun's face darkened with disappointment, as he remarked gloomily, "And so, the door still remains closed to us."

"Far from it," replied Don Jim. "We have several full reels of copper telegraph cable in the hold of the 'Cerberus' and, unless I am mistaken, that should be enough to return the ship to the world, at least. Once there, we can obtain copper in unlimited quantities and return with it. All that is necessary is to finance its purchase."

"But what have we of value to offer?" asked Jaun. "Surely our limited possessions would make but a poor showing in your great world."

For answer, Don Jim crossed the room and picked up an alabaster statuette of exquisite workmanship. "This alone would command a price equal to at least one-twentieth of our needs. Any collector would vouch for its antiquity."

"But that is of comparatively recent origin; scarcely fifteen hundred years," interposed Anika. "We have many pieces much older than that."

"Then your problem is as good as solved, isn't it?" asked Don Jim with a smile.

"But there is still another problem" said Jaun, "a very serious one, which I must ask both of you to give your deepest consideration. And that is; what would be the effect of our arrival upon your world today? Would all your nations prove amenable to the sudden appearance, in their midst, of a strange race of people whose customs and traditions are no doubt much different from their own? Do not answer me at once, but talk it over with your companion."

"To be frank," said Bob soberly, when Don Jim had explained, "I am afraid that question is too much for me. I could hardly set myself up as a world authority."

"But what are your personal reactions?" asked Don Jim.

"Well, that's different. My personal analysis is this: Territorially, it would be a great advantage, for I gather that through regulation, there is a static population here and we have seen that there is much undeveloped land. That means renewed exploration to a world populace now familiar with every hidden corner of their planet; a new frontier to absorb some of its excess population, and I daresay the Atlanteans are enlightened enough to off-set any exploitation, such as has usually occurred in the case of newly discovered lands.

"Commercially, it would be a boon to a world suffering under its own overproduction.

"From the standpoint of culture, I candidly don't know. Anika has told us of the two opposing priesthoods. If their teachings are deeply ingrained in the minds of the people in the form of religion, I'm not sure that it would be wise, for you know, religious differences have occasioned more warfare and suffering to mankind than any other cause.

"Yes," said Jaun, when Don Jim put this question to him, "in the beginning the cults were of a very religious nature, but the passage of time and the enlightenment of the people has brought about a change, so that now their differences are purely sociological and economic."

"In that case," resumed Bob on hearing this, "I can see no objection on that score. It's just the age-old struggle between the 'ins' and the 'outs'. The ever-present difference of opinion. Carthage and Rome; Rome and the Gauls; slavery and freedom; and even in our present day, Capital against Socialism. Perhaps, the introduction of a new viewpoint might even aid in solving some of the present world problems.

"But the political effect in the world, of the introduction of an entirely new nation is a question I'm not even prepared to discuss. Why not take Jaun, and some others of his selection, back with us as

envoys to confer with some of our leading political economists?"

"'A Daniel come to judgment'," quoted Don Jim. "Clear, concise and to the point. I can add nothing."

JAUN'S acceptance of this plan was immediate and his admiration for Bob was quite apparent. "The Americans must be a very wise and noble people, if he is an example," he said enthusiastically. "Now it is time for me to report to the Burogoi on Mount Olympuzan. Would Bob care to accompany me?"

"Mount Olympus!" cried Bob ecstatically when he heard this. "To stand on the most hallowed spot of all antiquity! Why, it would be all my dreams come true! Would I care to go? Why—But ask him how it would be possible. I'm too pale for an Atlantean."

"That can be managed," said Jaun. "He can go as a domesticated Gazta. Many of our personal attendants come from their ranks."

"But why is it," asked Don Jim, "that if the Gaztik come from the same original stock as yourselves, that there is so much difference in the color of your skins?"

"Our coloring is not natural. In ancient times, red was considered the color of nobility, which brought into use the custom of artificial pigmentation. Tradition has kept up the practice, although we look on it now rather as a personal adornment. It is necessary to renew it every few years."

"So that is why the Egyptians always depicted their gods and kings as being red," said Bob on learning this. Then, taking the abbreviated costume that Anika handed him, he flushed slightly. "Well, if I ever get back to the States, I'll be well qualified to enter the nudist movement."

When the two had gone, Anika remarked: "I, too, have my duties, but should you care to come, I think I might be able to interest you in some of our early records."

"I shall be delighted to come with you and it is entirely unnecessary to bribe my interest," replied Don Jim with a smile.

"I think I'm going to like earth-men," said Anika, her eyes sparkling.

She led the way down a number of corridors and then up a stairway through several apartments, whose walls were honeycombed with tiny pigeon-holes, each bearing a different carved character above it.

"These are the vaults of records," she explained, "and this," opening a door into a sunny room, lighted on all four sides by large windows, "is my workshop in the very top of the Tower of Archives. Do you like it?"

"Immensely," answered Don Jim, looking about. "It's most pleasant. And, just what do you do?"

"Here," responded Anika, picking up a number of parchment-like sheets, covered with strange-looking characters, "are the various reports and statistics from yesterday. I revise, condense and consolidate them and send them to be permanently transcribed."

"May I ask how that is done?"

"Certainly. My work is copied on sheets of moist clay, which are then formed into cylinders, with the characters inward. Within each of these is placed a piece of living wood tissue. It cells are then forced to abnormal growth and it expands until it tightly fills the cylinder, which is then broken away, leaving a wooden matrix. This matrix is impregnated with dye and any number of impressions may be obtained by rolling it over sheets of the live inner bark of the gineko tree, in which the cells have first been turned flat and expanded to many times their normal size. These sheets are then bound into tablets."

"But where do you keep them? Surely you couldn't pack the records of ten thousand years into those vaults we just came through?"

"Yes. All of them are filed in those little cubicles you saw. When a tablet is completed, the wood cells are returned to their original size and the tablet shrinks until you could hold many of them in the palm of your hand. When anyone wishes to consult a record, he simply expands the cells again.

"But I promised to show you some early records. Here are those relating to the Hellene invasion. I brought them up yesterday to study, when Jaun told me of your presence in Atlantis. I realize now how foolish I was to expect to learn anything about the present earthmen from those."

She handed Don Jim several thin transparent plates upon whose faces were carved, in intaglio, minute characters. These indentations were inlaid with gold. They looked so fragile, his hands trembled and he set them down carefully, lest they break.

"But how could you have kept such delicate objects intact all these centuries?" he inquired in amazement.

"Oh, they are durable enough," replied Anika. "They are composed of metal which the early Hesperians treated to make transparent, an art which is now lost to us. Aren't they beautiful? You may handle them without fear. And now, I must get to work."

DON JIM studied the plates for a while, but as he could make nothing of the characters, he could only admire their beauty. Tiring of this, he strolled to the windows and gazed out over the city.

Built up solidly, it extended from the lower, tree-clad slopes of Mount Olympus to the sea, whose surface sparkled in the distance. Here and there, Don Jim could see many Kapetik flying leisurely about; while occasional groups went by at a swifter pace that hinted at official business. Just below, a party of Kapetik children were darting about the spires of a building, as though engaged in a game of aerial tag, now and then squabbling noisily like a bunch of quarrelsome sparrows. He took his binoculars from his case and fell to studying the daily habits of the Atlanteans on the streets below. Presently, Anika joined him.

"You have a magnificent view from up here," he remarked.

"Why, what have you there?" she inquired, indicating his binoculars.

"Oh, this is just a worldly invention for satisfying curiosity," he answered, smiling. "Would you care to try it?"

"But I can see nothing," said Anika.

"You must adjust them to your eyes with this little screw. Here, like this."

"Oh, how marvelous!" she exclaimed. "It's like traveling to a distant object in an instant. This must be like the Hesperian vision-tubes, of which Jaun has told me. I have never seen one before. What is its principle?"

"Its basis is a lens with two convex surfaces—"

"Oh, but I do know about those. We use a rock-crystal of that nature to study plant and animal cells."

"Well then, the principle is much the same, except these have a longer focal point. But look down there, just to the right of that arch, and tell me what those people are doing. I have been watching them."

"That is a Gaztik training area. The Basileans are attempting to evolve a type with two thumbs on each hand, one on each side, and to train the little finger to be as skillful as the index finger. You can see the advantage that would give a craftsman. The training consists of using the little finger and the opposing muscle of the palm to handle various tools and objects. So far, they have not been successful beyond the development of a rudimentary nail in place of a callous on the palm of the hand. But the development of new types comes slowly."

A preoccupied note in her voice caused Don Jim to regard her contemplatively. There was an expression of anxiety in the blue eyes, beneath those jet-black lashes.

"What is troubling you?" he asked kindly.

"I'm worried about Larry," she answered with a sigh.

CHAPTER VIII

LARRY MAKES A BARGAIN

THE sun had nearly set when Jaun and Bob returned, Bob's eyes shining with pent-up enthusiasm.

"What a day!" he cried to Don Jim. "Atlantis! A living archaeologist's paradise! And there isn't a paleographer alive who wouldn't spend five years in the middle of the Sahara just to study one of the hundreds of inscriptions I have seen today. Oh, if I could have just had that pompous old ass, Withington B. Withington, Ph.D., F.R.G.S., and E.T.C., with me for half an hour."

"Isn't he the one who criticized your 'Derivation of Hieratic Variants' so?" asked Don Jim slyly.

"Oh, that's not the reason. I hope I'm not childish enough to resent criticism," answered Bob, coloring slightly. "But," he added, "I could have torn his pedantic 'Asiatic Origin of Mayan Symbols' to shreds in ten minutes."

Don Jim fought valiantly to conceal his amusement.

"Apropos of symbols," continued Bob unnoticing, "ask John Henry the meaning of these on my sandals."

"That is the emblem of his supposed status. Everyone in Atlantis is classified and bears the insignia of his rank on his clothing."

"I thought it was something like that,"

said Bob, when Don Jim had explained. "You see, after waiting a long time at the portico of the temple, I wandered about the grounds and got interested in some inscriptions. A guard came up, acted mad and asked me a lot of questions. I pulled the dumb act, pointed to those symbols and traced part of the Lord's prayer in Sanskrit for him in the gravel. He chased me back to the benches with the rest of the attendants. I guess he thought I was crazy."

"And well he might," said Jaun on hearing of Bob's adventure. "The temple grounds are reserved for the sole use of the Burogoi. No Gazta in his right mind would invade them."

"Tell him I hope I haven't stirred up trouble for him," said Bob contritely.

"I think not," reassured Jaun. "Had the guard doubted him, he would have slain him on the spot." Then he added apologetically, "I realize now how unwise I was to expose him to so great a danger without his knowledge."

"Rest assured that Bob fully realized his peril and, had it been fourfold, it would have been no deterrent in the face of such an opportunity."

"I did not doubt his courage," answered Jaun, "but my conscience has been troubling me ever since I asked you to aid us. I hesitate to think of what your fate at the hands of the Burogoi would be, if we should fail."

"Perhaps no worse than that of any earthmen who fell into their hands, regardless of their sympathies."

"What more can I say in the face of such logic," and Jaun smiled his admiration. "Still, we have not received Larry's consent."

"There," laughed Don Jim, "you lack the worldly knowledge of his forebears. They have been in a state of spasmodic rebellion since the dawn of time. Revolt against constituted authority will be no shock to Larry's mind. The prospect of a possible fight would prove irresistible. Besides, have you forgotten the annihilation of the crew of the 'Cyclops'? Larry's father was among them."

"I have not forgotten," said Jaun grimly.

"Why not let Larry answer that question, himself?" asked Anika, who had just entered. "He and Amoziz have just returned."

THE distinct note of relief in her voice went unnoticed as Don Jim glanced eagerly to the doorway.

Larry burst through the door, dragging Amoziz by the hand. He pulled up before the rest and made an exaggerated bow, which Amoziz mimicked so faithfully that they all burst out laughing. Larry raised his hands to quell the thunderous applause of thousands.

"Ladeez and gentlemen," he announced in stentorian tones, "permit me to present not only the greatest flyer of all times, but also a prince of good fellows. And can he fly? Why—" Sheer inexpressibility silenced him.

"I'd say you enjoyed this flight better than the last one," said Bob, "but, tell me, how did the crew accept Moses?"

"At first, most of them thought he was Old Nick, himself," replied Larry with a grin. "And I guess some of them think so yet. But that didn't stop them from enjoying his company when I coaxed Ole to break out a few bottles of gin. They all think he's great. And he is! And can he fly!"

"I've heard it was so rumored," put in Don Jim

"Listen, you mugs, you ain't heard nuthin' yet. I made a deal with Moses and he's going to teach me how to sprout a pair of those bat-wings, while I teach him to speak English. I've started my part already. Moses has been with me all day and I've been drilling him all the time and, would you believe it, the guy's so smart, he knows some of it already. Don't you, Mose?"

"Yah, shure," replied Amoziz in unmistakable Swedish accents.

"So he's been with you all day?" howled Bob in glee.

"Well, Gus Swanson took him below for about five minutes to see the engines," returned Larry, crestfallen. "The lousy squarehead!"

As Don Jim had predicted, Larry was in complete accord with their plan to aid the Hesperians, even seeming to feel a little hurt that Jaun might have questioned his willingness, even momentarily. Those "rotten Burro-guys" were a bunch of murdering wardheelers, weren't they? Extermination was too good for them.

"Then, since we're all of one mind, suppose we take stock in the situation and work out a definite plan," proposed Bob. "How about that radio, Larry?"

"Okay, skipper. I brought parts for a small portable set, with batteries for re-

ceiving and a hand generator for sending. I rigged it on the way in and as soon as Moses and I landed I made a quick test and got Wilson. He and Eric are standing twelve-hour watches. The Cerberus is standing by thirty miles out and will report her position hourly."

"Good. With our base and communication safe, we can turn our undivided attention to the local scene of action," said Don Jim.

"But," objected Bob, "haven't you forgotten the possibility of the Cerberus being sighted by some incoming vessel?"

"Quite true," and Don Jim passed this disquieting suggestion on to the Atlanteans.

"There is no need to worry on that score," answered Jaun. "There are no incoming vessels, nor have there been for many thousand years. Our ancestors explored this planet fully on their arrival and discovered that, outside of Atlantis, its entire surface is covered with water."

Don Jim translated this startling bit of news to the others.

"Gosh, what a spot for a channel swimmer," was Larry's comment.

"Then," said Bob, "we simply have to organize our party, fly to the Cerberus, rig up the cable and take off."

"Not quite so simple as that," said Jaun after Don Jim had relayed this plan. "Any party leaving the city would be stopped by the patrol. Even a number of single departures in one day would be noticed. I'm not sure that Amoziz and Larry were not seen last night, despite the fact that Amoziz is familiar with all patrol movements. Do you think they saw you, Amoziz?"

"I don't believe so. I kept to the upper level and was protected by cloud banks most of the way. Returning, we landed far to the west in the plains-country and waited for darkness, when we slipped into a group of carriers from the gineko plantations and came on with them. But my absence today will have been noted, even though my patrol was idle."

"I will have Gonzak, of the hospital, report you ill tomorrow. He is a true Hesperian and therefore trustworthy. You will escape with a minor punishment for a tardy report."

"But," asked Don Jim, "aren't these carriers liable to speak of having seen them?"

The Atlanteans smiled. "The Kapetik used in the transport service to the plantations," explained Jaun,, "are an off-shoot or partial failure in the development of the flying-man. They are enormously strong, but their mentality is no greater than that of the Gaztik. Their role is that of the beast of burden. Only the perfected Kapetik are in official service and none but the highest can meet the patrol requirements. They will be our greatest danger. Our safest plan is to dispatch our party singly, at intervals over a period of several days. In event that any are attacked, they must fight to a finish, for the Burogoi have no mercy. It will be death or the short bestial life of a Gazta.

"Well, now about the matter of weapons," remarked Bob, when Don Jim had explained why they could not leave immediately. "Tell him that ships don't carry much in the way of firearms in this day and age. Oleson has a pistol, I believe, and, of course, I have my automatic, also a shotgun in my cabin."

"We Hesperians are not altogether defenseless," replied Jaun on receiving this information. "Like Larry's countrymen, we have revolted many times in the past and have established several secret bases in the sea caves and among the rocks of the hills. Our order, though secret, is well organized, and can, when the opportunity arises, put a well equipped force in the field. That oxygen-tube of mine is but one of the many types of weapons we have at our disposal."

The two Americans were quite heartened at this bit of news.

"What are we waiting for?" growled Larry.

"Not so fast my sanguinary friend," said Bob. "Never underestimate your adversaries. From what I've seen of their organization, I would say they were worthy of a healthy respect."

JAUN'S face cleared when Don Jim translated this. "Bob is quite right," he declared. "The time is not yet. If we can accomplish our mission to your world secretly, on our return we can make our preparations to move Atlantis back to her rightful place unhampered by the necessity of fighting for our lives. Even should a revolt prove successful at this time, before our ultimate aim could be accomplished the inaction of waiting might breed dissension and discontent within our own ranks. The quiet aftermath of victory rests heavily on the soul of the warrior. But when we are ready, I am sure we can give Larry all the action he wishes."

Larry muttered something about "unhung murderers", but agreed with the rest that Jaun's advice was sound. Jaun, smiling inwardly at the accuracy with which Don Jim had characterized Larry, turned the discussion to the make-up of the earth-bound party.

"My patrol are loyal to us to a man," declared Amoziz.

"Very good," commented Jaun with a nod of approval. "There is our transportation. Now we come to the choice of the emissary who is to meet the leading minds of your world, Don Jaimie. He should be sagacious, eloquent and quick of wit. In short, the ablest among us and, as such, should be the nominal head of all the Atlanteans on this mission. I can think of none better fitted for this role than Kulkava, the scriptor."

"No!" cried Anika. "You are better suited than he. The place is rightfully yours."

"There speaks the loyal heart of a sister, but not the wise head of the historian," said Jaun affectionately. "Don't let prejudice—"

"It is not that alone," interrupted Anika. "Kulkava is no doubt all you claim for him and I do not question his abilities, but somehow. . . ."

"Ah, so it is heart prejudice, after all. Though not the sort my conceit imagined. I remember now that Kulkava once sought favor in your eyes and that you were cold to his attentions; nor did I blame you greatly. The cold, austere marble of his personality would chill the heart of any woman. But do not doubt his loyalty. In all Atlantis there is none so true to our order. I would as soon doubt my own allegiance to the cause of Hesperianism."

"A statement to which we all bear witness," said a mocking voice.

In the doorway, surrounded by guards, stood the two Burogoi of the prison.

CHAPTER IX

ANIKA SPEAKS

"SEIZE the traitors!" cried the foremost Burogoi. "They shall—" A flying bench caught him full in the face and, with a cry of savage joy, Larry hurled himself upon the intruders. Two guards fell beneath his flying fists before they recovered from the surprise of his attack, then he, too, fell under the combined assault of the remaining guards. But as he fell, Jaun's oxygen-tube hissed twice and two more guards dropped.

"Back," shouted the remaining Burogoi, and covered by the guards, he retreated into the corridor.

"After them!" cried Jaun. "They must not escape, knowing what they do." But before they reached the doorway, the sound of hissing tubes and the agonized cries of the dying came from beyond the portal. Bursting into the corridor, they saw two of the guards, oxygen-tubes in hand, standing over the smouldering remains of the rest. "Hesperigo lazan," said one of them, saluting Jaun.

Jaun returned his salute. "Our secret is safe," he exclaimed in relief. "That is, the knowledge of our proposed uprising is, but the Burogoi will be missed and their movements traced to here. That makes us fugitives. To the roof. Amoziz will get his patrol to carry us to the hills."

"But we can't leave Larry," objected Don Jim. "Come, Bob, we must get Larry. Besides, some of the others may be alive and they will tell the Burogoi."

"Not those babies," said Larry, coming through the doorway. "They came out of it about the same time I did, so I just settled a few old scores." Blood was trickling down his face from a deep wound over one ear.

Anika ran to his side with a quick cry of compassion and put an arm around him for support.

"Are you fit to travel?" asked Don Jim anxiously. Larry grinned weakly but nodded his head.

"Come," said Jaun. "Our time is short." They hurried toward the stairs leading to the roof.

A vertigo seized Larry and he reeled, leaning heavily on Anika. He fought off his dizziness, smiled into her anxious face and started on again. Suddenly, there came a shout from the far end of the corridor and looking up, Larry saw a number of the red guards racing toward them. Anika, seeing their escape cut off, dragged Larry through the nearest door. As he left the hallway, the last thing Larry saw was Amoziz, from a position half-way up the stairs, looking apprehensively back at them.

Benumbed though he was, Larry noticed from the furnishings of the room they had entered that it was evidently part of Anika's

own particular quarters. Passing on through a second room, they stepped through a small door into an unlighted stairway. It was so dark and winding that, but for Anika's guidance of his faltering footsteps, Larry would have fallen. Downward they wound, interminably, and then Larry caught the familiar scent of sea-water. Emerging into the night, they came upon a small dock at the side of one of the great canals. Before them lay a queer raft-shaped boat, its deck covered with drying fishing nets. At a sign from Anika, Larry climbed shakily over the side and slumped upon a pile of nets, insensible. . . .

CONSCIOUSNESS returned slowly to Larry. Constant, muffled crashes followed by low, rumbling sounds dinned into his ears continuously. These, he associated with vague memories of nightmarish pain, from which cool hands brought surcease and oblivion. The sounds irritated Larry's slowly awakening mind with a certain indefinite familiarity which remained, exasperatingly, just outside the grasp of his memory. The actual sounds themselves, muffled as they were, did not bother him. In fact, if he could just remember, he would find them soothing, with their regular lulling cadence, just like—why, of course—waves. The sound of breakers hurling themselves upon a rock-strewn beach.

As though exhausted by this achievement, Larry's mind slipped back into the black shell of unconsciousness. Several moments later, he opened his eyes, but at first could make nothing of the formless shadows that met his gaze. As his eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom, the ragged outlines of a low-vaulted, rocky roof became discernible. Dim light seemed to be coming from his left. Turning his eyes toward its source, he saw in silhouette, the jagged entrance to a cavern and just beyond, the leaden sea.

He tried to rise, but sank back with a groan, his hands going to his head, where they encountered bandages. Instantly, Anika rose from somewhere by his side, anxious-eyed. On seeing consciousness in Larry's expression, a joyous smile lit up her face.

"Where are we? Are we safe, Anika?" asked Larry. "No more fight? No guards? Oh, you know—no Burro-guys?"

Anika's face lighted with comprehension. "No goddam Burogoi," she reassured him. Her expression turned to one of quick concern at the look of shocked horror on Larry's face.

"Gosh! I must have been talking in my sleep," he said sheepishly. Then he brightened. "So you want to learn English, too, do you?"

Anika nodded eagerly.

"Well," said Larry, "there's no time like the present." He pointed to himself. "Me—Larry," he said loudly.

"Larry," repeated Anika obediently.

Larry pointed to her. "You—Anika."

Anika shook her head. "Me—darling," she said mischievously.

"And how—I must have talked in my sleep," said Larry, his face crimson. "That will be all for this lesson. You learn too fast for me. Besides, I'm hungry," he added gruffly, making unmistakable signs toward his mouth. Anika hurried obediently out of the cave, but her eyes were sparkling.

Larry's recovery was remarkably rapid, considering the blood he had lost and the lack of nutriment in the shell-fish and berry diet which Anika was able to provide. However, to him, the return of his strength seemed aggravatingly slow. At times, his petulance must have sorely tried Anika, but with the tolerance of a mother with a surly child, she sought patiently to amuse and entertain him. Under this impetus, her progress in English was rapid and soon Larry was in possession of the main facts of their escape.

With Larry aboard the fishing craft, Anika had cast off the lines and, under the influence of the ebbing tide, it had drifted unnoticed out to sea. The craft, unmanageable despite her valiant attempt to man it single-handed, had drifted ashore to be wrecked in the cove, just below this cave where she had found them refuge.

"And here we are, safe as pennies in a sporran," commented Larry, "thanks to you."

Anika clutched his arm and looked searchingly into his face, her blue eyes large and dark with fervent appeal. "Jaun, Don Jaimie, Bob, Amoziz, you—think—they safe, too?"

"What? Those guys? Sure they're safe. Don't worry, it'd take more Burros than I've got whiskers to out-smart those mugs. I'll bet they've got their whole Hesperian

army out looking for us now," and he patted her hand confidently.

"Larry, you—good, you—veree wise," she replied smiling through half-formed tears.

"Oh boy, you just tell that to Bob when we see him," said Larry laughing.

ONE day, even Anika had to admit Larry was strong enough to go on. They planned, as soon as darkness fell, to proceed to a secret base maintained by the Hesperians some miles further down the coast. It was to this place that Anika had tried to sail the fishing boat. She reasoned that, since it was known to Hesperians only, they would be safe there and eventually some of the cult would come with possible knowledge of Jaun. Larry agreed to this plan, but bemoaned the loss of his red cloak, which he had thrown aside to fight the Burogoi. Clad in the dungarees and sweat shirt, which he had donned on the Cerberus against the cold of his return flight, he would make a conspicuous object against the dark coast-lands to any passing Kapetik. Anika offered her cloak, but Larry indignantly refused, mindful of her brief costume and the chill night air.

As dusk fell, they made their preparations to leave. Anika slipped into her cloak, Larry picked up a club he had made from a piece of driftwood. About to step from the cave's mouth, Anika seized Larry's arm and pulled him back quickly. On the beach, just below, examining the wreckage of the boat, was one of the red guard. Larry tightened the grip on his club and edged stealthily toward the entrance, but Anika tried to hold him back.

"No, Larry, no," she whispered. "He go—maybe."

"But don't you see, Anika," argued Larry, "this is a perfect setup. There's my red bath-robe, weapons and everything."

This decision, however, was not left with them, for the guard, having finished his examination of the boat, now advanced toward the cave, holding his paralyzing wand in readiness. Larry, crouching behind a rock, waited until the other had almost reached the ledge. Then, with a savage cry, he launched himself upon him. Down they went in a struggling heap, the wand, knocked from the guard's hand, falling to the sand, where it lay just beyond their reach. With a grunt, the guard wrenched himself loose. He jumped to his feet, and just as Larry closed in on him again, he stood erect, the wand in his grasp. This slender rod then became the potential deciding factor of the struggle. Two straining bodies swaying in the growing darkness; the guard trying to bring its paralyzing tip into contact with Larry's body, Larry endeavoring to fend it off and at the same time seeking to gain its possession.

Weakened from his recent illness, Larry's strength soon left him. Closer and closer, the wand approached his forehead. With a cry, Anika seized the guard's wrist and tried to draw it back. Freeing his other hand, the guard struck her savagely on the side of the head and she fell stunned on the sand. Larry saw red. For a moment, he gained the upper hand and almost throttled the guard, but it was only the false strength engendered by emotional hysteria. Soon, the menacing tip was once more approaching his forehead.

There came the sound of rushing wings, the pad of running feet, and Larry felt the guard torn from him and hurled backward.

"Moses! Good old Mose!" he cried weakly.

Brandishing his wand, the guard struggled to his feet. Taking one stride toward him, Amoziz delivered a kick squarely in the middle of his back. The spine snapped and, propelled by the mighty leverage of that long leg, the guard's body spun through the air a dozen feet, falling among the rocks, a contorted shapeless mass.

"Is he hurt?" cried Amoziz, running to where Anika was bending over the prostrate Larry.

"He is still weak from his wound, but I think he is all right," she answered. "But quick! Tell me, Amoziz. Jaun is—"

"Safe," replied the birdman. "All of them are safe, but deeply apprehensive about you and Larry."

"How did you ever find us?"

"Jaun was certain your only escape was by water and the Burogoi evidently thought so, too, for they have had patrols scouring the beaches daily. I simply searched the coast by night and watched the guards by day."

"'Simply.' And without rest, too. Good, faithful Amoziz! Oh, I am so happy," and Anika burst into uncontrolled sobbing. Amoziz stood looking down at her in awkward embarrassment.

"Boy! What a kick!" said Larry sitting

up. "An ostrich couldn't have done better. I always knew you were a bird, but I wasn't sure of your—of your—"

"Classification?" suggested Amoziz.

"Classification! Classification!" roared Larry. "That's a two dollar word. Bob taught you that. I get it. He's teaching you English, trying to get the first pair of wings, the chisler."

"You first—always, Larry," said Amoziz smiling.

"Well, maybe—but not on this occasion. Women and children first," and pointing to Anika, Larry made a sweeping motion toward the sky and strode into the cave.

CHAPTER X

ACROSS THE TIME-WAVE

IT WAS late when Amoziz returned for Larry, and in his fatigued condition, Larry was soon lulled to sleep by the beat of the bird-man's wings. The slight jar of their landing startled him into wakefulness. He scrambled from the net and looked about him. They were on the brink of a palisade overlooking the ocean. Amoziz drew him into the shadow of a rock and stood for some moments searching the sky. Then taking Larry's hand, he guided him, stumbling, down a small gully. Abruptly, they entered a cleft between two walls of rock. Steadily, this rift grew narrower until Amoziz, placing his knees against one wall, pushed mightily with his shoulders against the other. Soundlessly, the solid-appearing wall divided into two thick slabs and swung ponderously inward. Holding this open, Amoziz motioned Larry to enter and, following him, allowed the portal to close behind him. Larry heard him fumbling in the dark and then a soft glow appeared from a globular object in his hand. Momentarily, the light grew stronger, showing a tunnel-like cavern, stretching downward into darkness.

"Come," said Amoziz, starting down the rocky pathway. Down they went, their path growing steeper until at last it suddenly leveled. Here, the character of the tunnel changed and Larry felt sure that this part was artificial. After several minutes' progress, this was borne out by the appearance of a set of rough-hewn stairs, leading upward. At the head of these, Amoziz opened a door into a room whose vast proportions faded into obscurity, despite the brilliant glow from somewhere overhead. Seated about a table in the foreground were Jaun, Anika, Bob and Don Jim; while at its head stood a tall Atlantean clad in green.

Bob and the others greeted Larry joyously and then Don Jim led him to the green-clad stranger, whom he presented as Kulkava, the scriptor. Kulkava surveyed Larry coolly from head to foot.

"So this then, Anika, is the hero and companion of your lonely—or shall we say—not quite so lonely, exile?" he asked mockingly.

"I am sure he did everything within the power of a gentleman to make my isolation a pleasant one," returned Anika quietly.

"What? You credit this uncouth barbarian with the attributes of a gentleman?"

"If kindliness and courtesy are two of those attributes, I find him far better fitted to the role of a gentleman than some of the Atlanteans who masquerade under that title," answered Anika, rising haughtily to her feet. "If you will pardon me, I shall retire."

Silence reigned for a moment after Anika's departure, then Jaun said quietly: "I think it were wise if we all followed Anika's example." Then turning to Kulkava, "Please forgive her, she is no doubt distraught by her recent experience."

"Distraught or demented," retorted the other shortly.

When Larry awakened the next morning, he found himself looking up into an enormous dome, like that of an astronomical observatory, though far greater than any he had ever imagined. From far overhead, a pale greenish light filtered down to partially disclose great pieces of massive machinery, standing about on the smooth floor of the building; yet the immensity of the machines seemed lost in the vast extent of the inverted bowl-like structure.

"What kind of a dump is this?" he asked, prodding Bob, who lay beside him.

"Huh! What? Oh—solar generator," muttered Bob sleepily.

"Yes," spoke up Don Jim from Larry's other side, "this one was incomplete at the time of Atlantis's transition, and being well within the ring of power plants, was 'teleported' to this time-wave with it—if I may coin the word. Due to a slight difference in the water levels of the two planes, it lies beneath the ocean, just off the present shore. It was discovered ac-

cidentally many years ago by Hesperian fishermen, who dug the secret tunnel."

"How did it work?" asked Larry.

"I am not certain, except that the entire dome rotated about these stationary machines."

THIS discussion was interrupted by the appearance of Jaun and Anika, followed by several Kapetik bearing food. While they were eating, Amoziz came up from the tunnel.

"Kulkava has gone," he reported to Jaun. "Sometime during the night, and he has taken Jacoa, his personal flyer, with him."

"Perhaps it is just as well," said Jaun, with a glance at Anika. "Besides, his absence would have been noticed by the Burogoi long before we were ready. Mine no longer matters."

Don Jim and Anika drifted into a conversation which Don Jim did not translate, so Larry and Bob strolled off to examine the mighty machines at close quarters. As they progressed, Larry's wonder and enthusiasm grew.

"Now this is something like it," he declared. "These old-timers had something on the ball. Why didn't your Greeks and Wops leave you stories about this kind of stuff, instead of musty old dragon's teeth and gold sheepskins?"

"Didn't I ever tell you about the Welsh legends of Seint Greal?" answered Bob. "In one of them, a man named Peredur traveled over the western ocean until he reached a land where he saw many wonders, including 'revolving castles that turned with the speed of the wind'."

"It's no use. Y' can't win," muttered Larry through his teeth.

As soon as darkness fell, Jaun dispatched Amoziz to the palisade, to watch for Kulkava. After waiting vainly half the night, it was decided to proceed at once to the ship, where Kulkava might join them at his own convenience. And, in less than an hour, Amoziz's patrol had deposited them lightly on the deck of the Cerberus.

Prepared though they had been by Amoziz's previous visit, for these incredible beings, nevertheless the crew displayed an air of subdued excitement, until Bob discovered that this was occasioned, not by the sight of their strange visitors, but by the expectation of more gin.

IN THE days that followed without sign from Kulkava, Jaun grew morose and silent as he strode about the deck, hardly speaking to anyone, even Anika. Larry, suddenly shy and diffident at Anika's approach, would stammer incoherent excuses and take himself off, much to Anika's surprise and, strangely, to his own bewilderment. Don Jim, however, sought her companionship whenever his duties permitted. Meanwhile, the work of preparing the Cerberus for her departure went on apace under the supervision of Jaun and Don Jim. The great spools were brought up on deck and the cable hung, in one continuous coil, around the sides of the ship on improvised supports. Finally, Jaun announced that the number of turns was sufficient, and personally superintended the installation of the switch-board on the foredeck.

Early one morning, a cry from the lookout brought them hurrying up from below. Far in the western sky, a tiny speck could be seen approaching. It soon grew to the form of a fast-flying Kapeta. Landing, he strode to Jaun, to whom he spoke earnestly for several moments.

"I must return to the solar-generator," said the latter, turning to the rest.

"No, Jaun, no!" cried Anika. "Here you are safe, while there lies danger."

"But I must, Anika. There has been some miscarriage of our plans and Kulkava needs me," and with that he swung himself into the Kapeta's net. In a moment, they were in the air, climbing rapidly. Anika ran to the rail, where she stood looking after them long after they had disappeared from sight.

"Sail ho!" called the lookout, pointing aloft. A speck had reappeared in the sky and was dropping swiftly toward the ship.

"Jaun! He's coming back!" cried Anika joyfully.

"No, Anika," said Don Jim gently, "This one is coming from the north."

The Kapeta alighted on the deck and ran toward them. It was Jacoa, Kulkava's carrier, but he was alone.

"The Basileans are coming!" he shouted breathlessly. "Look, you can see them already." He pointed northward and there, through a slight haze, a long line, like a thin stratus cloud, was rapidly advancing.

"Where is Kulkava?" asked Don Jim.

An expression of loathing crossed the flyer's face.

"The traitorous dog! This morning he

accepted an appointment to the Council of the Twenty."

"THEN Jaun has gone to his death!" wailed Anika. "Oh, Don Jaimie, help him!" and she turned to him, seeking shelter in his arms. The look in her eyes was so all-revealing, that it was apparent to all the rest that she was not only appealing to the man, but to the lover.

"The luck of the Irish," muttered Larry thickly.

"Jaun is safe enough for the present," said Jacoa, "for Kulkava, himself, leads the Basileans, with every available Kapeta."

"But he will be taken, for he knows nothing of Kulkava's treachery," sobbed the girl.

Larry sprang to Bob's side and wrenched the pistol from Bob's holster. "Gimme that automatic!" he cried. "Come on, Mose! There's work to be done. Don't worry, Anika, we'll get through to Jaun all right."

Without an instant's hesitation, Amoziz swung him into the net, ran swiftly forward and sprang upward from the deck.

High above the oncoming horde they flew. Suddenly, three shapes detached themselves from the mass and darted up to meet them. Then, one slowly folded his wings and plunged downward into the sea; while back to the watchers, there drifted a single, sharp report. The remaining two rose above Amoziz and closing in until their wings overlapped, dropped upon him. The tangled mass hurtled seaward and then, as though by a slow explosion, separated into three falling units. The sound of two more shots came through the air. The center unit wavered, then recovered and shot up far into the sky, safe beyond the Basilean horde.

"Oh, Jaimie! Jaimie! He has done it!" cried Anika in ecstasy. She stood for a moment watching Amoziz as he swung sharply to the west, then she murmured softly: "Larry—my dearest friend."

"And bravest," added Don Jim. Then, glancing up swiftly at the menacing armada, now almost upon them, he seized the heavy switch handle in both hands and plunged it home.

Again the Cerberus seemed to heave itself out of the water. The sea spun about him in some vast, roaring cataclysm and Don Jim lost consciousness.

When he came to, he found himself wedged against the scraper-house, Anika beside him. Bob lay against the forward rail. About the deck were scattered the members of the crew, some beginning to get to their feet, while others lay still insensible. The Cerberus lay half on her side in the midst of a sloping woodland. Anika opened her eyes.

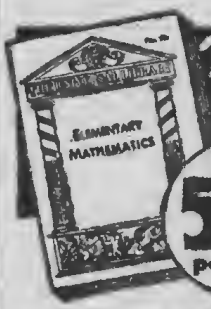
"What a terrible experience," she said. "Is it all over?"

"Yes," answered Don Jim gravely, "I hope so, but I don't quite like the look of our surroundings."

"But they are lovely," returned Anika looking about her. "Your world is every bit as beautiful as mine."

"But this is not my world, Anika," answered Don Jim, pointing up to where a magnificent double sun shone down upon them. "We are on the wrong time-wave."

THE END



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But at night the Ruler of the 98th Universe—the Infinite Dimensional Brain in his transparent vault—suspended high above the northpole of the world 101^{20}, was indeed a never-to-be-forgotten sight. The Ruler of his Universe constantly was unleashing his titanic forces which, sweeping through his vast Realm encompassing thousands of light-years, kept law and order in myriads of Worlds revolving about their thousands of far-distant Suns.

YOU could see and hear the monstrous forces, unleashed from the Brain's great globe, fixed motionless above the pole and radiating in every direction. Great coruscating streamers of light, serpentine-like, everchanging in color and hue, burst from the surface of the outer layer of Transparentum. Like an Aurora Borealis, only on a gargantuan scale, the pulsating colors blinded you if you came closer than a tenth diameter of World 101^{20}. Indeed, at a lesser distance you would be vaporized by the huge forces, even if you were composed of the basic material known as eternal rock.

If your ether-instruments were attuned to outer space, you could hear the staccato, pulsation-like, huge explosions, that never ending, rose from a low crescendo to a rumbling, super-bombardment, that left you unnerved and numb. If you watched the Brain, remote in the sky at the same instant, you could see the color-radiations from the visible spectrum which, as indicated by the ether-instruments, extended far into the region of the Ultra-X. In the latter case you no longer needed eyes, because your whole self lit up with the super-radiation; you had become a receiving station attuned to the Brain! Your whole body was itself radiating super-colors, softly in the fantastic light-emanation, while you yourself now pulsated rhythmically in symphonies of color and invisible beams of Ultra-X.

BUT that memorable night it was different. The Brain was getting restive. This happened only rarely, when there was great urgency in a far end of his Universe. What happened? Only the Brain knew. Normally it took a great many light-years to transmit orders to distant worlds. The Brain's energy consumed then was "normal." When normalcy prevailed throughout his Universe, it did not matter how long the transmission took. But as part of the Brain was constantly revolving through all of the dimensions, time nor space had of course any meaning for the Ruler. He was always in instantaneous touch with the remotest part of his Universe, even if it was a million light-years distant.

It appears that the Brain had glimpsed in the 42nd Dimension that a Super-Sun from another Universe was heading for his own Realm at terrific speed. Instantly he calculated that the foreign Sun, a super-giant, was destined to cut a wide swath through his own Universe, destroying hundreds if not thousands of worlds in its path.

THE Brain acted instantly. A silent order, to his subjects, sent them fleeing into the interior of their world. The Science-Men, through their instruments, saw the Brain's globe high in the heavens, motionless but terrible to behold. He was concentrating titanic amounts of energy into a certain direction of the sky. World 101^{20} trembled as if a giant was shaking it. Burst upon burst of Ultra-X spectral-color emanated from a single spot of the Brain-globe. It lit up the heavens in its ghastly-ghostly super-light, impossible to describe. It was dangerous to look at it for more than the merest second.

This spectacular celestial display kept up for a long time. Then as suddenly as it had started, the phenomenon stopped. Everything was peaceful once more. Normal.

The Brain announced that he had given his Universe an impulse which would rotate it 12^{0} upon its axis. 59,000 space-years hence, the foreign Sun, still pursuing its original course, would arrive where the Infinite Brain's Universe would have been, but thanks to his foresight, would then be in another, distant part of the Heavens. Safe.

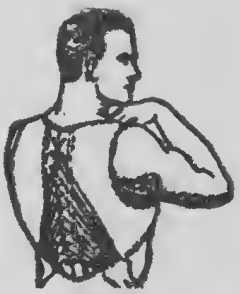
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THE PRINCESS OF DETROIT

Illustration by Forte

It was bad enough when a ship which had no business there came into the platform at the way station in space, but when that ship turned out to be manned by an invisible woman . . . !

I bounded down the steps of the control tower with all the grace and speed of a pixilated elephant, the nearest performance to flying our minus-one gravity would permit. Dashing breathlessly and blindly around the corner of the tower, I tripped over the out-stretched body of Pinko and went sprawling.

The lanky Centaurian elevated his frame on an elbow and displayed annoyance. He was given no time to really wind up.

"Hey! What do you think? Guess what!" I sputtered, wiping away smears of the artificial sod from my face. "A ship! I just picked it up on the detectors."

Pinko rolled over on his belly and boredly yawned, a gesture somewhat startling when performed by a ten-inch beak.

"Ah, me . . . the bubbling effervescence of youth!" He removed a blade of the manufactured grass from his mouth and critically examined it. "I wonder what this stuff is made of? It tastes awful!" And he favored me with an overly-suspicious start: "You been chewing on this stuff?"

I almost found myself denying it; then held my head in my hands and rocked in agony. How can you convey excitement to these Centaurian birdmen? He slapped a lazy wing in my face.

"But I mean it Pinko! I have picked up a ship, a big one, and it's headed this way!"

"Go way boy, you bother me!" He tried to shove me away by the force of his wing. "You know as well as I no ship is due for at least a day. The Passage is as quiet as a dead moon!"

"I do know it!" I exclaimed, the while dancing a jig around him. "That's just it . . . this ship isn't coming from Earth! It's coming down the Passage from Outside. It hasn't any right to do that . . . we ought to do something about it!"

Pinko yanked up a tuft of grass and chewed it reflectively. "It is just possible," he murmured in an outrageous stage whisper. "Soak it awhile in water, add a dash of some chemical, and it's just possible!" He smirked at some inner knowledge.

"What are you raving about? What's possible?"

"One might be able to brew an intoxicating beverage of this grass." And then as I stared, he added: "Don't you think?" cocking his head over in a gesture he fondly imagined was cute.

"Oh hell, Pinko!" I felt like pounding him. "I'm not drunk and I'm not imagining things. I tell you a ship is dropping down the Passage from Centauri way!"

"Now get this . . ." he began disgustedly—but he never gave me whatever he had in mind. The signal bell in the tower cut loose, amplified to a volume easily heard anywhere in the station. I had the extreme satisfaction of seeing him startled and felt better immediately. We broke into a run for the tower stairs. Pinko hooked-in the vision plate with the detectors but all he saw was stars; the ship was yet too far away to register.

"Contact her!" he snapped. "Find out what ship she is, and why she is running the line in reverse!"

I already had the earphones on. Dangerous business, coming in Earthward along the Outer Passage, the track laid down on paper and reserved exclusively for outgoing, Centauri-bound ships. Alpha C. was our nicest neighbor, but we couldn't permit that. Inward-bound ships were supposed to use a similar trail, known as the Inner Passage which is billions of miles from here. The two separate passages (to quote but one of the reasons mentioned in the travel booklets) existed to prevent the

by BOB TUCKER

(Author of "Interstellar Way Station," "He Drove," etc.)



Abruptly I caught sight of the hanging gun to the rear of him, off in a dark corner.

danger of a head-on collision; traffic could be heavy at times.

"PICK them up yet?" he asked.

"Not yet. Either she doesn't hear us, or refuses to! Wait a minute . . ." I plugged another jack into my earphone set and switched current into a gadget; said gadget a trifling little thing hardly weighing a half-ton. We flippantly call it "the liar". It's something of a military secret, but to give you an inkling as to how it performs when used by us, regard it as a detector to our own signals on the other ship. By it we can determine whether the ship in question is failing to receive our signals, or really getting them and pretending not to. In which case the gadget proves them a liar. Complicated and heavy thingamabob, but handy to have around.

Pinko grew impatient. My machine is damnably hard to arrange, and I played around with it for many minutes without results. Try pinning a spotlight, providing such a thing were possible, upon the rapidly moving body of a hurtling ship and you can picture a shadow of the job on my hands.

"Got 'em!" I cried, and by luck I had. Dead center and following with ease. By thoughtfully focusing a short distance ahead of the ship they neatly ran right into my—oops! almost gave away a military secret. But I pinned them and stuck with them. "They are receiving." I reported. "They do not answer."

I listened hard for many minutes. "Still no response," after call after call was flung away. Their receiver is tuned to our band, with another on General . . ." Meanwhile the ship was dropping nearer with all outward intentions of visiting us.

"Sighted!" Pinko crowed, really crowed. I walked over to the plate, earphones dangling on one ear.

"Cripes!" That was me. The ship took my breath away, all but what was needed to expel that one word. The biggest thing I have ever seen in all my life, and I've been peddling gas in this old apple for years! She wallowed around in the ether like an ungainly elephant; either with an inexperienced hand at the controls, or a sick one. Coming in from the outside, I was doubly thankful no other ship was scheduled this way for a day or so; I'd sure hate to be in the vicinity if and when that lumbering giant out there met up with anything, even a mail rocket. Pinko was transfixed, watching her. I kept the one ear peeled but she never uttered a word. Or even a Centaurian peep for that matter. Just stubborn silence. Dropping down on us in eerie, deadly stillness.

"We've hooked a fish," I said, breaking the silence in the tower. "Now can we land it?"

"I don't know," Pinko clipped. "Never handled anything that large before. If she doesn't clear the cradle shaft we'll have to go out to her." We watched the play of lights on the instrument board (she was now too close to be seen on the plate) that informed of her movements. A heavy thud shook our big ball, and the mystery ship had landed. But not softly, or gracefull. By lights along one edge of the diagram, she was overhanging the cradle awkwardly; probably by several feet of her tubes.

A grating, shifting movement then became evident, made itself felt by a scraping sound running along the metal skeleton of the depot, vibrating in the girders. One by one the tell-tale lights on the diagram blinked off as the ship hauled itself over the line. A master green bulb flashed all clear.

Pinko expelled a breath and reached for the cradle control. Across the way in the power house machinery took on a snarling whine as the cradle girders sank from sight, bringing the ship down. I was too excited to climb into dress-whites as regulations demanded during the visit of a passenger vessel. The cradle bottomed and stopped. I found myself hanging from a tower window, staring at the stranger open-mouthed, and I knew Pinko was likewise engaged.

MAYBE you've heard of us? Waystations like this one (we are E1AC on the star maps) are dotted all over the system where ships and men roam. The legend, E1AC, indicates that our station is the first of such on a hypothetical line between Earth and Alpha Centauri, the line known as the Outer Passage. When you are travelling you will find our stations every so many space-days apart, depending upon the circumstances. There is only one other in this passage, after us.

Heavy ships; liners, freighters and men-o-war drop in here to refuel, approximately one day's journey out from Earth, for the big push on to E2AC, hanging just a couple of days this side of the Big Star up

yonder. For passengers we have a small guest hotel, a pool of real earth water, and imitation green grass just like back home.

Our big metal apple is anchored here more or less stationary by the power we draw from the sun and to a minor degree, the other stars. Pinko is my senior by several years, both as to age and status; I am a comparative rookie. We serve an alloted number of years at this work and then go home with a second-class citizen's rating to enjoy the so-called fruits of our labor, providing the politicians and glib salesmen have left us any money to live on.

We are, to put it bluntly, a glorified gas station in space.

I STOOD on the ground beneath the nose of the mighty stranger and read her name, the Princess of Detroit. She was, as we found later by examining her and thumbing through the books after her pedigree, an oversized, ungainly monster, so altogether useless her design was abandoned after a bare half-dozen like her had rolled off the assembly line. Of the Earth-Detroit class of 2103, her few sister ships that managed to see the light of day and a welder's torch were each named Princess of this-or-that after various North American cities. This ugly offspring of a drunken draughtsman's board was so huge she just did fit our cradle, snugly. I admired her pilot, whoever the hush-mouthed fool could be.

No, nothing nor no one had yet appeared from the ship. We stood there with our dingy gangplank ready, gaping at the closed port like a couple of idiots waiting for the man to pass out candy. We waited until the gangplank grew heavy in our hands and Pinko dropped it on my foot. Not even my respondent howl of agony brought a response from the ship.

"Well," I gasped at last, "what do we do now?"

"Crack it open for them if they don't open up in five minutes!" he was determined and annoyed.

We waited five minutes, and five minutes more to be cautious, then shoved the gangplank up alongside the hull, ladder fashion, and Pinko clambered up to wrestle with some screws imbedded in the plates near the portlock. Something came open revealing a recessed square, housing the remote controls to the lock. Providing a playful party in the ship's interior didn't object, and block us, Pinko would soon have the lock open.

Nothing but putrid, stale air rushed out in greeting. We shifted the gangplank into proper position and marched up to the yawning lip. Pinko shouted into the blackened interior and I echoed him, without result.

"All right!" he squared off, "if that's the way they feel about it . . . why, that's the way they feel about it! We'll go in after them. Say—what's the matter with you?"

"Uhhhhhhh . . ." I uhhhhh'd, "do you mind if I run get a rifle first?" I was not frightened of course, I merely wanted something handy to lean on should I grow tired. But Pinko gave permission minus sarcastic remarks. And in we went, armed.

We were met everywhere, on all sides, with a beautiful blank silence. Chill, ominous and unending, it glided along behind us and even succeeded in muffing our footsteps until I took to pounding the rifle-butt on the floor in sheer desire for sound. We searched the length and breadth of that ship; every stateroom, crew's quarters, the captain's own cabin (naughty man! It showed signs of feminine occupancy), storerooms, closets, tuberooms, bafflerooms, under the flooring and even peeped into storage tanks containing openings large enough to admit a man. The same silent emptiness everywhere.

In the main control room we found the decorated plastic ceiling cracking and the fuel gages registering a vacancy of that precious material in the tanks; that last mute evidence of why the ship came in. But who brought it in? Pinko sank onto an officer's bench.

"What the hell!" he exploded.

"Oh, I wasn't aware," I ventured timidly, "that you were familiar with our Earthly institutions?"

He shot me a glance that made me glad I was toting the rifle. I backed off and sat down in the pilot's seat. It felt funny and he must have caught the expression on my face.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked for the second time.

"This chair is warm! Someone has been sitting here!"

"Maybe someone still is!" he snorted. "You'd better get up and apologize." And between us we rapidly did not clear up the mystery of the vacant liner. All we

could and did do was sit there gaping at each other, questions popping into our eyes and being answered likewise. It was creepy.

"I'll resign!" Pinko exploded into action again. "I'll quit! I'll go home! Let's notify Earth, it's their headache, not ours." But it was our headache and we had no aspirin; we couldn't get the fear of the things out of our minds, and yet we were too artificially brave to get up and run like hell out of there. The ship created a nasty atmosphere all around.

He arose and stamped out. It was furthest from my desire to be left alone in that gigantic empty hull, but for some reason I hung back. The warm chair-seat was puzzling, but ogling about the room I could see nothing amiss. Just for luck I pulled the firing pin from its socket and pocketed it. Without that pin the rocket motors could not be operated. Feeling immeasurably better I followed Pinko out, the magic key to the Princess joggling in my pocket.

WE NOTIFIED Earth a few hours later after encountering some difficulty in establishing contact; told them the unabridged story of our find and a description of the ship. There was silence for a long while, much longer than was necessary for the return of a message. I pictured some official thumbing a copy of Jane's Ships of Space. What he read there must have impressed him unduly, for Earth then informed us in a quaintly worded, placating tone that two men were being dispatched immediately to relieve us, accompanied of course by a light cruiser, to see us back home.

Duly impressed ourselves, and unduly excited, we did what we should have done hours ago. Pinko dug from dusty files a copy of the book and leafed through it for the better part of ten minutes. I then distinctly saw him read and re-read a page three times. He handed the book to me.

There was given several hundred words of text and a picture of the Princess of Toronto, an identical twin, of course, to the Detroit lady now roosting in our cradle. Of the five ships in this class, three were already scrapped, a fourth was wallowing back and forth on an Earth-Moon run, and the last, the Princess of Detroit, was no more; having been deserted by a villianous crew one or two years ago. She was reliably reported as having fallen into the sun.

"S-a-y!" I naively rattled off, "that's the ship out there that fell into the sun! . . ." But Pinko had vanished, which perhaps was just as well for me. I speculated as to whether I should pack my suitcase now or wait until the cruiser came. Pinko undoubtedly had gone into his favorite hole when baffled by an enigma: he could usually be found hiding under a tarp in the basement of the guest hotel, swearing in his native tongue. And all the while that damned dead elephant out there squatted in our cradle with nary a movement or sound about her.

WE were awakened several hours later by the warning bell in the tower out-doing its intended duty. I was on the verge of packing my suitcase when Pinko called down to report a freighter from Earth, and not our expected replacements. I curse that ship to this day! That stinking old tub arriving ahead of schedule certainly destroyed a lot of otherwise peaceful moments in my life. I, of course, would have to haul our elongated enigma outside and wait for the freighter to hop off again; we had but one cradle and no place else to put the ship. As it happens, my experience in piloting ships is confined to those small fool-proof, one-man runabouts. I knew next to nothing about handling a dainty dinosaur like this, except that the same words were embossed on the handles. Great comfort that was!

I waltzed into the liner with my rifle and the firing pin. But I was out again in two minutes flat, bug-eyed, breathless.

"Now what?" Pinko inquired sarcastically, "is the chair still warm?"

"No . . ." I gasped at him, ". . . but the tanks are full! The fuel tanks. Every blasted one of them!" Under other circumstances my senior officer would have battened me down then and there to eagerly await the replacements; but this mystery ship had altered things. He bolted away, not into the ship but for a more quick and obvious check; the underground storage tanks. A brilliant, educational wave of flowery language flowed back as he read the gauges sprouting from our tanks. During the time we had slept a good-sized load of fuel had strangely transferred its bulk from our supply to the ship! While we wasted time running about and wran-

gling, the freighter blew in overhead and sounded off in impatience.

Pinko went to the control tower and I re-entered the big ship, all-in-all feeling rather glum and gooey in the mouth. Mechanically I closed the portlock and inserted the firing pin. As the cradle shoved me topside I wondered if I would ever see the old place again. Abruptly I was homesick.

Locating the freighter hanging a safe distance away, I gave it a signal and plunged what I fondly believed to be a judging finger on the blasting button. Having forgotten to fasten the safety belt, I picked myself up off the floor to see the other ship zoom past and behind me at a positively dangerous nearness! On my board the receiving signal tried to burst its socket; but after noting that it was I, and not the freighter which was doing the zooming, I deemed it prudent just then not to open up my set. Without a doubt some not-so-nice, strong words were being bottled up inside, strangling the tubes! I didn't believe I wanted to hear them, not then. I swung the ship around in a sloppy manner and hove-to to watch the freighter settle on the cradle.

THE poor ship never got inside then, and not for some time afterward. Her crack pilot squatted her down dead-center on the cradle and waited for Pinko to lower away. Pinko would have, too, if it were not for the fact a three-ring circus suddenly and unexpectedly exploded outside his vision-plate window! Too, I imagine that the crew of the freighter forgot all about their landing duties as they lined up at their plates and windows, stupefied, to watch the spectacle.

I was a few minutes late realizing it, but and the Princess of Detroit were providing the entertainment.

And it wasn't my fault either. I was sitting there like a perfect gentleman with my hands folded in my lap, watching, when most unexpectedly a blunt object connected with the back of my head! It was most surprising, especially to me. Quite an unsportsman-like gesture to be sure, so instead of falling out of the chair like any decently black-jacked gentleman would have, I slopped forward across the panel onto a row of studs. And naturally things occurred.

My wallowing cow was suddenly fed a magnificent burst of over-rich fuel, plunging it forward like a rocket amok, which was just what it was! Simultaneously upper and lower steering rockets burst into flame and the long heavy ship began executing neat somersaults, spinning end on end in turbulent bursts like a pinwheel gone mad! Forward flip-flops. For perhaps a full minute on the stage of deep space it gave a creditable imitation of those theatrical oriental tumblers, six lean, lithe gentlemen, each attempting to out-whirl, out-tumble their five whirling brothers.

And then we stopped dead-still, like jutting into a wall.

Forward braking rockets grabbed ether and nullified the push from the rear. The steering rockets continued to belch flame. Jammed as we were between two forces, front and rear, we could do but one thing. We spun. Like a mad little planet streaking its day and night into perpetual twilight, amok on its axis, we spun. Like a runaway merry-go-round, minus glassy-eyed horses and jangling organ, we whirled.

I hung to the chair with both arms as my feet gyrated in dizzy circles about me. Me and another body, the party of the second part and the unsportsman-like blackjack! Clutching me in a stomach strangle about the waist, we whirled! The two of us.

The tired old plastic ceiling, cracked and powdering for all these years, gave the lie to the manufacturer's claims and showered down on us like snow. We were covered with it. About that time I managed to reach out and hit the neutralizer stud; our wild gyrations came to a halt. Out the forward window our old depot was so close I could count the rivets with ease. Did I fancy that even the old apple was sweating from the close shave?

My friend of the stomach strangle was disentangling himself, regaining his feet. I saw him . . . "him" my eye! Her, now! The powdered ceiling was clinging all over her, making her body visible. All but the eyes; she had closed them during our melee and now they were great pools of startling emptiness in a sketched face. Mere holes! I shuddered to think of her creeping about the station, invisible, while we slept; wondered what else she had purloined besides the fuel. But Jitterbugging Jupiter! Invisible! Not even our military had that secret. I thought to remove the bloodstained blackjack from her fist.

WE WERE off again! That was a mistake, attempting to part a woman from her weapon. With tooth and claw she lunged and clinched, and the tooth and claw weren't figures of speech. She owned them. They streaked down my face in stinging furrows, followed quickly by a most unethical kick in the shins! Bellowing and leaping backward, I made the second mistake of squatting squarely on the panel board. What happened after that I don't know, the next few seconds were a nightmarish jumble of pictures flung before my eyes; I had to rely upon the observation of a dumbfounded Pinko, later, to hear the tale.

With its rear to the depot my ship suddenly vomited flame and kicked off, the force of the initial explosion shuddering the station on its anchors! Straight away into deep space we arrowed, as fast as a tardy little comet hastening to complete its orbit. For the space of a few seconds. And then, Pinko swears, that long ungainly elephantine vessel checked itself in the time it takes to gasp a breath, and flopped over on its back; completely reversed its direction in one length of itself and came speeding back! When I scrambled off that panel and punched a stud, I took up my life where it left off short seconds before, and thought to look out the port window. I stared into the ashen face of the freighter captain, seemingly a few feet away. His face was so pale the stubby whiskers stood out one by one. Behind him I caught a glimpse of the crew, swooning where they stood. I grinned a sickly hello. The captain fainted.

And then the freighter and the station fell away behind, I whirled to the panel. The lady was there before me.

"Very well," an eerie, musical voice commanded. "Stand as you are. I have a gun."

"My eyes are pretty good, lady!" I said. It wasn't wise to argue with half-seen ladies holding a completely visible gun at one's midriff. I stood. The gun floated closer. She had wiped the ceiling off her arm so that it hung there, apparently suspended in air.

"I HAVE use for you, slave!" Her voice carried a puzzling undertone, something apart from the natural strangeness to it.

"So have I, lady!" Where did she get that slave stuff? "I planned on inhabiting my body for some time to come; that is, if you don't object too strongly. And please point that gun away!"

"Silence, slave! You will speak only when you are spoken to! I am going to give you your life; you were but doing your duty. And I have a use for you! I cannot permit you to return to your people."

"Please, lady," I started to get out. "What's going on here? . . ."

"Silence!" she thundered. The ceiling powdered us with more snow. "Know you not better than to question your superiors? And when you address me, address me as Your Highness! Do you understand, slave?" The gun bobbled in accent to her words.

"Oh sure la— Yes sir, Your Highness! But I don't understand all this Your Highness. You stole our fuel Your Highness, and you stole this ship! Your Highness . . ."

"Cease!" she screamed and a stark, crazy note crept in. The gun in her hand trembled. "No, stop! Do not harm him! He knows not what he says." And she waved at an invisible entourage behind me; invisible because I turned around to look. Her bearing was regal, that is, those bearings she hadn't already burned out.

For my Your Highness was cuckoo. Off center. Her firing pin was blown. The holes in her face stared into mine, and her voice whined like an overloaded generator.

"Repeat not such foolish assertions. I may not remember my promise to spare you, again! I have stolen nothing. This royal vessel is the ship of state. And I am the State! It belongs to me and my court—" and again she waved at that unseen mob which should have been breathing down my neck, but wasn't. "I repeat, slave, I have stolen nothing. Hear ye?"

"Uh-huh, Your Highness."

"Very well. I appoint you pilot. Take over. Poor Armbrewster has been injured. He was a good pilot!" She stared at the floor beside me. I looked down and saw nothing but powdered ceiling and the marks of our feet. "Yes, he served me well. Poor Armbrewster!"

"Tch-tch-tch." I said. "Bleeding pretty bad, ain't he, Your Highness?"

She didn't answer me, but waved to a couple of lackeys to carry poor Armbrewster away. She followed the body out with her eyes. So did I, but I didn't see anything,

not even marks on the floor. Poor Armbrewster and the lackeys must have been featherweights. I walked over to the panel, then turned to look at her.

She smiled at me in a perfectly lovely way; she couldn't have been very old, and said:

"You will keep the ship on its present course, pilot. I shall know if you turn aside, or attempt to return to your people!" The gun she seemed so familiar with provided an exclamation point.

"Yes sir, Your Highness!" I paused, and then added: "Oh, Your Highness . . ."

"Yes, slave?"

"I would . . . I mean, I uh . . .Your Highness. Whom have I the honor of . . . serving?" And she said:

"I, slave, am the Princess of Detroit!"

SO here I sat, eating quite invisible food from cans without labels. That last tasted like beans, but I couldn't be sure. Odd how the sense of taste fails one, when the eyes do. Her Nibs, the princess couldn't be seen either, now. She had retired to the former captain's cabin and dusted herself off. Now I never knew when she was near except for perhaps a warning tickling of the skin on my neck at times. I didn't believe it would be polite to turn around and watch the floor.

I did my best to insure and hasten my rescue without being too obvious about it. My captor knew a whole lot less about this flying turtle than I did, and I managed to cut speed a full quarter without her getting wise. It would only be a matter of time before that cruiser would arrive at the depot, receive some startling news—verified, by the way, by the freighter crew—and come hotfooting after me.

In the few quiet days that followed I learned a lot, both about running one of these big boats, and about the princess. She became chattily confidential once she found I was willing to be a nice slave; or perhaps it was my charming personality. She couldn't tell me all the story of course, for somehow she lacked the power to keep on the right track. Arriving at some vital point, I would be on the verge of hearing some startling information, and she would go rattling down a siding. Like this:

"Oh, slave, look at the moon!"

"Where?"

"Out there . . . that port! Isn't it beautiful? I always love a moon in the last quarter."

Meanwhile we were galloping around somewhere between Earth and Alpha Centauri. Frankly, I found the moon rather dull, not near as nice as ours back home. But I agreed with her it was a marvellous last-quarter.

I dug up a ship's log; this ship's log. The authorities were partly right. The Princess of Detroit had been deserted by her crew. Budding mutiny stared up at me from the pages of the log, entry after entry I saw it growing in ink. And then all of a sudden, at the final entry, I found the answer to almost the entire riddle.

A woman had been smuggled aboard, stowaway, by a member or members of the crew. The indignant captain had promptly accused one of the men and just as promptly was shot for his pains. After that the log stopped, the second in command probably growing irked at the tiresome duty of keeping it. I finished the story in my imagination, supplied by tid-bits of knowledge dropped by Her Highness. This Armbrewster, poor Armbrewster, apparently had been the gentleman desiring feminine company on the voyage, and accordingly tossed her under his bunk with his suitcase. The nosey captain had found her, and the incident was the spark that touched off the feature of the program: the mutiny.

Sometime after that the crew deserted the ship, but made the capping error of deserting the woman also. Or it could be they knew nothing of her, although that was hardly possible. I couldn't blame Her Highness much for going crazy. I suppose any woman would have, left in her position. The major miracle to me was that she had kept alive and kept the ship afloat this long a time! On invisible beams!

I WAS beginning to be worried about that cruiser, for while the princess was pleasant company, still I didn't desire to spend the rest of my life with her. She might grow old and ugly, and I wouldn't like that. I hadn't, of course, counted on the intelligence aboard the cruiser, or the fact that I was supposed to be the bad boy who had absconded with a liner! They couldn't know about the woman, not even Pinko.

The two of us were sitting on the floor discussing flowers one "day", when a thudding jar knocked us both off our balance. Startled, she jumped up and ran to a port. I knew what it was. The cruiser had connected. I moved toward the panel.

"Stop!" she screamed, and whipped up a gun that had been unseen by me for a long time. "Don't touch that panel! Who are they? What do they want?"

"They are my people," I said, " and I am very much afraid they have come for me—I hope." I turned to her but she had vanished, the floating gun was not in evidence. Still, I was afraid to go to the panel, in the chance that she might subscribe to the belief the only good slave is a dead slave. It really wasn't necessary; duplicating Pinko's earlier performance, they opened the lock by remote control. A swish of air and clomp of heavy feet announced this. I caught sight of Pinko over their shoulders. Marines.

"Pinko!" I yelped. "My old bosom buddy!"

My old bosom buddy waggled his head gently, sadly, and clicked sympathetically. Abruptly I caught sight of the hanging gun to the rear of him, off in a dark corner.

"Don't shoot!" I waved my arms and cried. "Don't shoot, Your Highness!"

The marines and Pinko regarded one another and me in perplexity. None of them had their weapons alert. Pinko clucked again. The gun in the corner lifted, lined up with an invisible eye level.

"Look out!" I screamed, and flopped on my face, "she's going to fire!"

The bunch of them, my rescuers, stared down at me stupidly. They were utterly dumbfounded for about the length of time it took her to pull the trigger, rapidly, three times. Marines fell all over me, around me, and someone burrowed under me. I found my nose in a coat sleeve, neatly blanketing my breathing.

"Who did that?" the gentleman underneath me cried. He was in charge of the braves. "Where is he?"

"Listen buddy," I gasped out of the sleeve, "I ain't talking, see? But if you will—" And I stopped. The gun was gone.

"But if I will what?"

"—IF you will follow me, I'll try to show you." I popped up and led off. I had a hunch and my hunch was right. We found her in the captain's cabin, a powder puff dashing at a spot where her nose must be. I bowed to her, slowly.

"Your Highness, we have visitors. These gentlemen wish an audience. They have come to negotiate my release." I salaamed again. Pinko was staring at me with a beautiful green haze in his eyes. The braves were tapping their skulls with knowing smirks.

A shot from her gun ended the audience. Almost literally.

"I am sorry," I said to the squad leader outside. "But Her Highness cannot be disturbed." He grabbed my necktie and yanked.

"Young fellow! What is this nonsense all about? Are you crazy? Never mind answering, I don't believe you! Who fired that shot? Where is he hiding? You might as well come clean, I see everything!"

"That's fine," I returned with some feeling. "What did she look like?"

"She? Who is she? What are you raving about?" he yanked again.

"She is the woman who fired those shots! She has been right here on board all the time. She kidnapped me! She is in that room." I turned to Pinko. "You tell him chum! Remember how the ship set down? How our fuel was stolen? There is an invisible woman in there!"

"I've had about enough of this nonsense! I'm going in there!" and the squad leader hitched up his belt before charging the door.

"Goodbye," I said. "Nice to have known you."

He brushed me aside and stepped to the door, his marines after him. I grabbed Pinko and held him back. The soldier boys appeared in the doorway and more shots greeted them. They dived for the floor and peered about. Then I heard the hammer of her gun click down empty. I stepped through the door, between spraddled arms and legs.

"Your Highness," I salammed, "these persistent gentlemen are back again." She hurled the gun at me and I ducked it. Pinko didn't. A few feminine knick-knacks followed and then there was quiet. I turned to the leader lying on the floor, staring in amazement.

"My dear fellow," I said. "I still am not talking, as I mentioned awhile ago. You wouldn't believe me. However, if you will kindly fire a few rounds into the ceiling over that dressing table, you will be an enlightened man." He looked up at me, quizzically. "Go on!" I urged. "Up into the ceiling."

At his order the men raised their rifles and sent a volley upward. It snowed in that room, and all saw. There must have been a smirk on my face.

"Her Highness, the Princess of Detroit!" I performed the proper introductions. "Your Highness, my people." She graciously bowed.

SO I beg to report, Pinko and I are still doing business at the same old stand. I have just finished putting the finishing touches to a paint job on the guest hotel. Playful children with flame guns know more language than is proper of their age.

Pinko is a wondrous wise person. He has a theory for everything.

"It was caused by cosmic rays!" he declared. "The woman was left aboard ship by the deserting crew and consequently driven insane by fright and loneliness. She took her name from that of the ship, and childhood schooling provided associating memories which caused the rest. By some odd streak of luck, or perhaps some little skill, she kept the ship afloat until she finally ran out of fuel. We found enough food still aboard to last her for years. Yes, it was cosmic rays. Odd, that they could cause invisibility!"

"Cosmic rays my eye!" I snorted. "It was caused by mental phenomena! In her own mind; by her own brain cells! I read up on mental phenomena. Evolution geared up by supercharged mental activity. A new brain cell burst open and caused her to become invisible automatically. Like growing a new finger, or something!"

"And," he came back sarcastically, "hoodoo'd the beans so you couldn't see them either?"

"Oh, the beans."

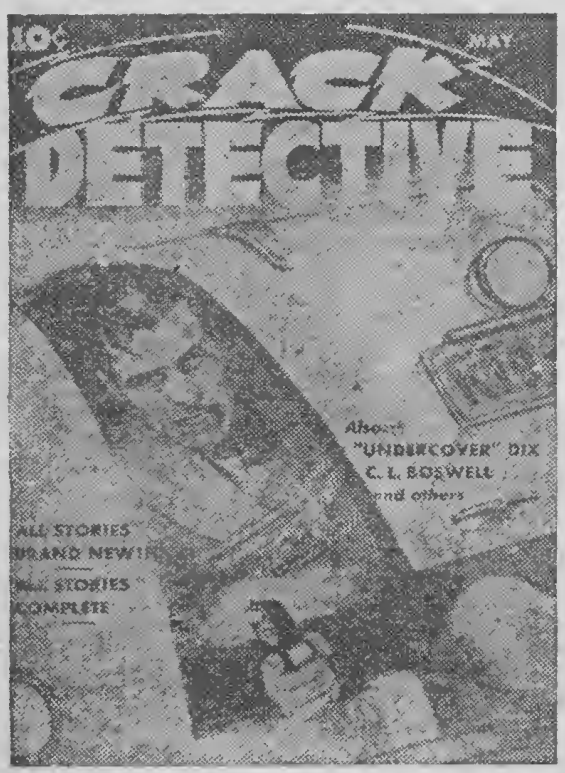
"Yes, oh-the-beans. It was cosmic rays! Shielding in that ship must have grown pretty thin with no check or control on it. She couldn't have known about everything. Well, we should know in two or three years—" (that last was sarcasm)—"it will take those old fogies at base that long to examine her and come to a conclusion! I could do it like that!" snap of fingers.

"Say," I spoke in an awed voice, "I just realized something."

"Yes? What?"

"That woman was undressed, Pinko!"

THE END



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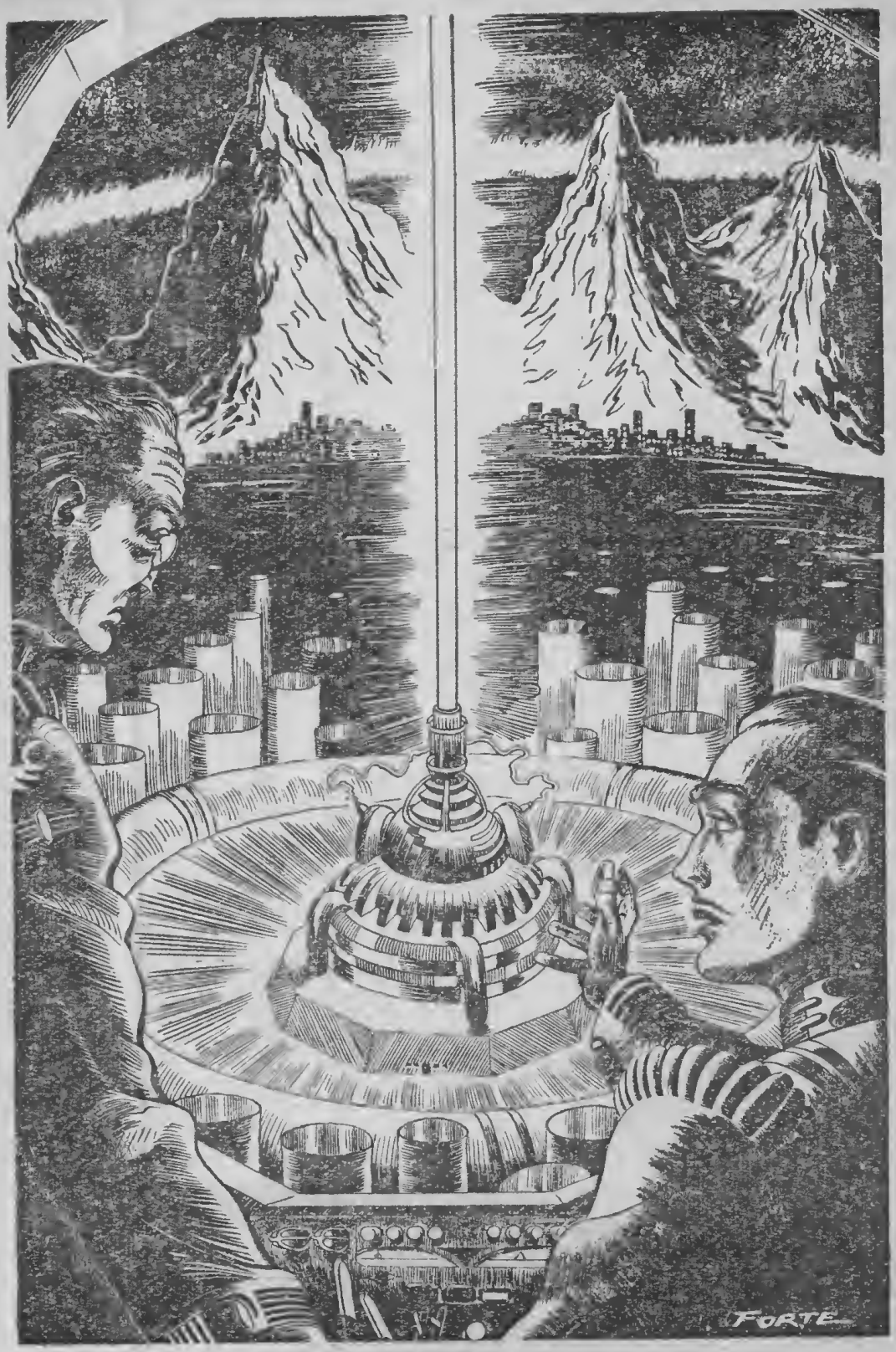
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Every line in that mechanism suggested terrific latent power.

THE SOLAR COMEDY

In the depths of the sun, whence they went to learn the actual nature of what we call "sunspots" a grim comedy was being enacted—and the beings of two worlds again encountered the deadly Metals.

by JAMES BLISH

(Author of "The Topaz Gate," "When Antares Came" etc.)

Illustration by Forte

CHAPTER I

INTO THE SUN

"HOW'RE we doing?" asked Heath, poking his head through the trap which led into the control turret. The pilot, Paul Strauss, shrugged his shoulders and waved at brilliantly glowing visiplates.

"Hard to tell, Johnny. The compensators are draining off current as if they were all shorted, and still the 'plates are too bright to see by. We're about 14,000,000 miles from the sun, plus or minus a thousand, as I figure it. Where's Doc Lane?"

"Below somewhere," said the expert in spacial mechanics, hoisting his rangy New Englander's frame into the turret and glancing at the white-glowing plates. "He and Xeum are checking the arsenal, I think—at least Xeum is."

"Better they should check the new screens. If they give way, we're cooked, literally. If something doesn't turn up before then, are you actually figuring on dropping us right into the sun?"

"Yes." John Heath shot the pilot a narrow-eyed glance. "You don't know much about the layout, do you, Paul?"

Strauss' fingers touched a stud, and the hot brilliancy of the plates clicked out to a dull featureless gray. "No, I don't. But you know I wasn't in much of a position to ask questions. I was on the wrong side of the Lunar Revolt in 2013, and only the fact that Xeum interceded for me kept me out of the Plutonian mines. That's where most of the IP men who took part wound up. But the mark of the beast was on me all the same." He smiled humorlessly. "So when I got this proposition from Xeum, I figured a suicide job was better than no job at all." He turned back to the plates, on which delicate images had begun to appear through the grayness. Then there was a muffled pop and a blinding flare, and the ground-glass surfaces were blank once more. "There go the first banks of photocells," he remarked in a conversational tone. "I'd better save the second set and use the Y-Ray. Any apparatus that operates by light is pretty well useless now."

"It isn't a suicide job," Heath said soberly. "At least, this leg of it isn't, although Xeum seems to think that there may be something on the other side that's dangerous—that's why we brought the arsenal. So far as the sun is concerned, Lane's new screens ought to protect us right down to the bottom of the photosphere. After that, if all goes well, we shouldn't need them any more."

"You figure on entering a sunspot, as I gather. I knew they were cooler than the rest of the sun's atmosphere, but not more than 2000° K. That's still hot."

"It is hot. The point is, it's my idea that those sunspots are very different inside than they are on the outside."

"Yes?"

Heath shrugged. "It's a kind of a crazy theory."

"Stop stalling," Strauss said, "Lane and Xeum staked their lives on it, so it must have some points in its favor."

"Well, it's like this. The gravity of the sun causes a tremendous strain in

the space around it; Einstein proved that. Now the planets produce certain strains, too Nothing compared with the primary one, but enough to affect it, to distort the pattern a little. When the forces of a planet and the sun interlock, they produce a kind of pocket in space, a spherical zone of—well, we don't know what. When they occur in outer space, as they sometimes do, they're small, and I think the IP Yearbook of Hazards to Navigation lists them—calls them Dead Areas."

The pilot grimaced. "They're listed, all right," he said, "but they're almost never where they're stated to be."

"Well, naturally, the movement of the planet that's causing it causes it to jump about a bit, and since it moves according to four-dimensional laws like all functions of hyperspace, the IP can't do more than guess wildly at probable paths. But the Dead Areas out there are small and not very important. It's when two or three planetary space-strains interlock with the sun's that the phenomenon really becomes impressive. It produces a pocket several thousand miles in diameter, within the atmosphere of the sun itself; and since no material object unassisted by geotronic forces can pass through the boundary of the warp, the sun's atmosphere swirls in great tornadoes around them. That's the cause of sunspots."

STRAUSS considered the idea in silence for a few minutes, his fingers adjusting the Y-Ray rheostats mechanically. "And so we're just going into a Dead Area," he said at last.

"Yes, but with a difference. You're thinking, I imagine, of the ships that blundered into outer space Dead Areas and never came out. The analogy isn't valid. Those Areas were not formed by forces of very great magnitude, and didn't go all the way through. Naturally it was fatal to enter one. But the sunspot pockets are made by forces that really count, and they are open all the way."

"Into what?"

"Eh?"

"You say, open all the way, didn't go all the way through. Open into what? All the way into what? The fourth dimension?"

"You're thinking sloppily, Paul. No, not into The Fourth Dimension or Cloud-Cuckoo-Land or Tir-Nambeo or the Land of Fey, but just into another space of three dimensions like our own, separated from ours by a four-dimensional barrier."

He paused as footsteps rang on the rungs of the ladder below, and the trap swung open to admit the drooping, ragged dog-ears of the Martian Xeum.

"You nearly exposed our metal hide naked to the sun when you put that Y-Ray tracer through the screens," he accused Strauss. "Warn us next time when you use a radiation instrument. You don't want to cook, do you?"

"Nope," Strauss agreed cheerfully. "But we can't use the visiplates any more with light, and I have an aversion to not seeing where we're going. Your friend was just explaining this dimension-crossing proposition to me. But why did we have to pile one difficulty on another by going through the sun to do it?"

The Martian shrugged, and waves of color played over his irridescent skin at the motion. "Heath did his best to break down the barrier some other way, but it takes the energy of a star to do the job properly." He looked at the visiplates, which once more showed an image, brought in on the Y-Ray tracer. "What's that? Vulcan? Good—we're getting close." Scanning the instruments, he began to write rapidly in the log. "Radius 13,129,000—ecliptic angle 12°—speed 720 mps. What's that make the orbit, Paul?"

"19.75 days," the answer came instantly.*

"Good," Xeum repeated, writing it down. "First important data for the exhibition. Better close the inner shutters now, just in case. It's getting hot."

In answer to Strauss' fingers there was the sound of rolling metal all through the ship. "You mean you're getting hot," he scoffed. "I don't feel anything."

"That," Xeum declared, "is the crass insensitivity brought on by being born on a tropical planet. 98.6 body temperature—walking ovens, that's what you are."

"Matter of opinion. Hello, the patter of little feetstoops again? It's Doc. Come in and join our conference."

"I'll join you," Lane sputtered, clapping

*In this age of compurions that "instantly" does not read as impressively as I had intended. In those days Strauss' ability to do complex mathematical problems in his head, had it not been for the historical accident of the Lunar Revolt, might have made him famous among scientists.

his glasses on his nose and glaring through them at the pilot. "I'll join you limb from tree, or something. You closed the shutters on my best spectrohelioscope."

"You won't need it," Strauss observed easily. There was an uncomfortable silence, through which the rapid, steady click of dripping water in the refrigerators and the soft, whining background of the air purifiers reminded them suddenly of what was still to come. Xeum plucked at his collar.

"DON'T let your imagination run away with you," Strauss said. But there was no doubt about it; it was getting hotter.

"It's all nonsense," Lane said. "The screens will hold. It may get a little warm before we're through, but there's no sense making a mountain out of a moppet, or something."

"Well, we'll hope so," said Heath. "I've got every confidence in your screens, Doc. But if there isn't actually a hyperspacial opening at the other end of that sunspot—those screens can't be expected to last under a very long bombardment—"

"There's no use exchanging mutual confidences in each other's theories now," Xeum said. "We'll know soon enough."

Again there was silence except for the click of the refrigerators and the whining of the pruifiers. With a deeper and more quiet sound, the geotrons twisted space around them. Little relays chuckled as Strauss shifted the controls. Transformers hummed. Yet all these little sounds only made the lonely silence more absolute.

Little beads of sweat began to form on the metal walls of the turret, and the frost on the ribs of the refrigerator which crisscrossed the ceiling was melting. "We're in it now," Strauss said in a quiet, preoccupied voice. From three visiplates inferno winked a welcome to the four men entering it; the fourth visiplate, showing the scene behind the ship, was a cool, tempting black. After a moment the pilot drew a wad of waste from under the control board and wiped the faint film of steam off the ground-glass surfaces.

The temperature continued to climb. After a while Strauss stopped worrying about the steam, for it condensed from the air as fast as he could wipe it off. The two terrestrial scientists sat tensely beside him at the boards, sweating and watching the instruments and the plates alternately. The irridescence of Xeum's skin had faded already, revealing and intensifying its blotter-like texture. Then the steam was gone, because the walls were too hot to condense it, and the refrigerators hissed futilely. . . .

The narrow-irised visiplates went dead black, and Strauss' fingers darted lightly over the board. The ship gave a violent lurch, struggled to right itself, and decelerated with dangerous haste. The hull creaked alarmingly as the floor seemed to shift under them.

"We made it!" Heath cheered. "Um," Strauss said, and the buttons under his flying fingers went clackity-clack, clackity-clack. There was a last sickening surge of deceleration, the hum of the geotrons dropped to an almost inaudible purr, and all motion ceased, the ship suspended. Xeum stretched a shaking hand over his shoulder and opened the visors for their first look at the new cosmos. There was a concerted gasp.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DARK UNIVERSE

TO ANOTHER observer the scene might not have been startling at first glance. It had to be considered in contrast to the holocaust of the inexplicably vanished sun to be as impressive as it was to the watchers.

For the sun had gone entirely. A black sky bore the hovering ship, from which unfamiliar, widely spaced stars twinkled metallically upon a night-bound landscape. To the north* was an incredible mountain range, jagged and split in the unweathered lines of a volcanic upthrust; yet there was no telling how long ago that siesmic birth had thundered, for the mountains were all of forty miles high, and weathering effects would not begin to show upon such masses of rock until more years had passed than human minds could conceive. . . . Extending from the terrifying heights of those ramparts, beneath the ship, and on into darkness, a black and gray landscape of tumbled rawboned rocks, without artificial or natural relief from horizon to horizon, shone feebly in the

*Preserving, for purposes of convenience, the orientation of the sun.

bleak starlight. From horizon to horizon? Meaningless; for there were no horizons. The acerb vista stretched indefinitely out, without any trace of curvature, and faded into the darkness imperceptably. The effect was of standing in the bottom of a shallow bowl. This dead world was apparently flat. . . .

With a muttered exclamation Xeum swung the lens in the other direction, and the terrible mountains swung out of the field of view. No change; merely the split and tumbled volcanic magma, and far to the south a smooth area that might be a nighted ocean. This area finished the vista, for before the opposite side was visible, the darkness claimed it.

"This looks like Pluto," Strauss whispered, unconsciously reacting to the depression of the scene. "Those mountains! And is this place flat, or am I dreaming?"

"It can't be flat," Lane objected in similarly low tones. "But it must be the biggest planet ever. It would have to be, to hold mountains like those." Strauss took over the rheostats from Xeum and stepped up the power of the televisor. The scene moved toward them, until apparently they were suspended over the sea. It was an ocean—of what, they could not tell, but the substance was certainly liquid. Oily, small ripples moved over it to the impulse of some vagrant wind. Still Strauss twisted the dial, and the surface sped smoothly beneath their vision.

The dial clicked at the end of its run. "Far as we go," the pilot said, baffled "Three hundred miles."

"And just a pond, a puddle, if the oceans run on the same size-scale as the rest of this planet," Lane said. "Too bad the Y-Ray wasn't built for distance."

"I'll ride it on the television for a carrier," Strauss proposed. "We ought to get thirty miles more at least." He flicked his fingers rapidly over the console-like boards, changing the vbibration setup. The Y-Ray rheostat turned, and the ocean began to slip past the screen.

"I see a shore-line."

"That's all you'll see," Heath said. "Thirty-one miles more on the nose—three per cent error for you, Paul! How far away is the shore still?"

"Twenty miles," Strauss approximated. "But wait—"

He peered more closely at the dreary view, and in a moment the others saw it as well—a dim finger of light reaching up out of the dark distance into the sky. It was hard to make any estimate of size on this Titanic world, but certainly the pale yellow beam was higher than the mountains. It was not very bright, but it neither faded into the darkness nor spread fanwise as the ray from an ordinary searchlight should. It was like a thin pillar of weak light, broken off abruptly at the top.

"Now what do you suppose that it?"

XEUM bent forward and looked carefully at it, frowning.

"Do you know, Xeum?"

The Martian shook his head. "I have a guess, but I'd rather keep it to myself for the time being."

"Well, whatever it is," Heath said, "it certainly can't be natural. There's life here, impossible as it seems."

Strauss had been testing the atmosphere. "Hotter'n Venus out there, and the air's thicker, too," he reported, "but's it's breathable if you have no particular objection to a strong sulphur dioxide stench."

"We ought to go out and take a look around," Heath said.

"Not like that you won't. Feel the gravity?"

"Why—it's normal, of course. The plates are on."

"Those plates are set to counteract sun gravity."

"Wheeew," Heath whistled. "And we don't feel a bit lighter! What a monster of a planet this must be!"

"We'll have to wear suits, with AG fields full on," Xeum agreed, "or we'll be crushed to a pulp by our own weight. Anyhow it will be cooler in them, and we won't have to breath that SO2 Paul mentioned."

Strauss gathered opinions with his eyes and put the ship gently into motion again. "I'll hover over the sea so somebody can run a test for drinkability." The silver torpedo glided through the dense air and came to rest, poised, over the oily, gently heaving liquid. Dr. Lane went below, and after a moment a winch whined and a vial dropped toward the surface on the end of a thin wire. As soon as it returned the ship began to move again.

The vial of liquid started in Dr. Lane a chain of disquieting thoughts. A study of the space-strains of the region quickly convinced him that the planet had no sun and belonged to no solar system—truly a wanderer; but it was the contents of the

vial—strong sulphuric acid—which brought home to him more strongly than any other fact the utter alienity of their surroundings, the absolute loneliness of their position. Ten years ago the last man to touch an unexplored planet had had the experience and passed on into history. Certainly it must have been thrilling—yet what were DiFalco's sensations in reaching Callisto compared to those attendant upon crossing into a new universe? This was not only an unknown planet; it was a new space, undetected even by telescopes and cameras, bought like ancient holiness with an ordeal by fire; and certainly it could not be expected to obey familiar laws.

But sulphuric acid! The size of the world might have been merely a trick of perspective or an abberation of the strain-detectors; the immense gravity was as yet an unexpected fact, made known only through the emotionless medium of instruments; the sunless sky was not strange to a man born on a planet where half of life is spent in night, nor were the strange constellations disturbing to one who had seen the skies of other worlds. It was this indisputable evidence of an ocean of deadly burning waters which brought home to Dr. Lane an intimation of the strange and terrible things which might lurk in this hyperspacial cosmos. He found himself wishing that Strauss had not started the ship in the direction of that mysterious beam of light.

He shrugged off the feeling and reported his findings to the others by phone. "Okay," the laboratory's loudspeaker responded, burlesquing Strauss' voice. "Come on up here, will you, Doc? This planet gets screwier by the minute."

WITH renewed trepidation he hurried forward and up the ladder. He found his companions grouped around the visiplates, discussing animatedly what was reflected there.

"Hey Doc, look. What do you make of this?"

He looked at the views and raised his eyebrows. At the 332-mile limit of the instruments' range the pillar of pale light showed clearly, and at its base a glittering metal oval was plainly visible. It reminded him of a Roman amphitheater. The beam itself rose from a monstrous mechanism which combined the features of a siege gun, searchlight, and dynamo—a massive thing, sunk into the stony ground upon a metal base even heavier. Every line of the crouching mechanical giant expressed latent power.

Grouped about the stadium-like walls a metal settlement had come into sight, but it was obviously only a factory district, a regularly-spaced arrangement of flat-topped cylindrical buildings like oil-tanks. In the distance behind the light the city proper made a vague glistening glow, from which he could resolve few details; and even beyond that was a blurred haze of flame which was carried on through all three other screens, even the one which showed the view behind the ship.

"East is east, but it's a small world after all," he commented somewhat enigmatically, adjusting his glasses. "That looks like a Carriker tight-beam to me. Come to think of it, they were just discovered in 1977, and didn't come into practical use until 1991. These people must be even more advanced than we are."

"Never mind the people," Heath said grimly. "Xeum's just given us his own theory about them, and it isn't the pleasantest one I can imagine. But didn't you notice that we've got a horizon now?"

Startled, Dr. Lane looked again. Sure enough—that glow he had seen in the background—a new horizon, but a mysterious and unnatural one. It was a distant ring of low, leaping flames, circling them completely.

Silently he stared at it, and he knew that his thought had occurred to each of the three others: was it a trap of some kind set around them by the people of the pillar of light? Then he noticed the location of the rearward edge of the circle. It passed the point where they had first made contact with this nightmare world.

"That," he said, "must be the boundary of the sunspot, showing through the warp a little."

Heath sighed and frowned at the flickering ramparts. "That was my deduction, Andy. Do you suppose the spot might be breaking up?"

"Possibly. But let's not borrow our bridges before they're hatched, or something. It will take a long time, and all it will do is precipitate us back into our own space when it does happen."

"We damn well better have the screens up and the ports closed when that happens," Strauss said.

Lane did not worry too much about it.

This world was not part of the sunspot, neither created nor maintained by its influence. The spot had been merely the gateway they had used. Maybe its breaking up would be a source of annoyance, but he could not see how its effect on the Titanic planet could be greater than this. What had made the boundries of the space-warp spring so suddenly into fiery relief he could not guess, but whatever had caused it, the effects could not have any moment on a world so huge.

STRAUSS' whistle broke in on his thoughts, and he turned and looked at the 'visors. Lighted by the pillar of yellow light, the sparse stars, and by glowings and flamings within itself, the city had assumed definite form. Again the omnipresent giganticism made it difficult to judge sizes, but it was obvious that the tallest of the metal towers could not be under four thousand feet. The skyscrapers covered roughly twenty miles of black rock, extending that distance to the right and left, and about ten miles back to the flaming line that marked the beginning of the space-warp. Indeed, the city went beyond the boundary no little distance, and the Solarites wondered if they could follow it through. Surely the inhabitants must have had some way of protecting themselves from being affected by the transitional area. The architecture of the metropolis was cubistic, but not extravagantly so; there was merely no ornamentation of any kind. Every line was functional, preserving an elemental beauty that was alien in its simplicity.

"Wonder why they build skyscrapers, with all this space around," he puzzled aloud.

"They aren't that kind of a race," Xeum said. "Clinging to the ground is not in their psychology."

Lane turned to him in abrupt interest. "You forget I didn't hear your theory on the nature of these people," he said. "What are they, and how could you possibly know?"

The Martian gestured at the screens. "Take a look at them, my friend; and while you are looking, think over the ancient history of my home planet!"

To Lane's eyes there were still no people visible; only robots, or vehicles, he could not quite decide which. Most of these were windowless metal cubes, flying along smoothly close to the ground, glistening faintly as if reflecting the light from a thin film of oil. There were also a few spheres, smaller and faster-moving.

"Are those the people?" he asked, frowning.

"Yes," Xeum said.

"Then I don't recall the part of Martian history you mean."

"Have you seen our visitor?" The irridescent finger pointed at the 'visor whose television eye looked out of the right side of the ship, and Lane gulped. Certainly the little machine gliding beside them seemed strangely familiar—if he could only remember—

It was made of three cones, numbers one and two joined face to face, numbers two and three tip to tip, along a common axis; and the ensemble was held together by tiny arches and rods and curved pieces which blended so smoothly with the body that no joints were visible. It was darting along with the ship with the pointed end forward, and its progress was a series of short, swooping arcs which were grace incarnate. Every motion of the little thing —it was not much longer than a foot— was poetry in shining metal.

"That must be a proxy-robot," Lane said. "I see an opening for the television eye in the tip of the front cone."

"That opening," said Xeum, staring at Lane grimly, "is for a force-ray projector."

The truth hit Lane like a blow.

"My God!" he cried. "The Metals!"

"Yes," Xeum said. "The Metals."

CHAPTER III

CITY OF FEAR

STRAUSS halted the ship and the four stood watching the screen in fascination. Somewhere below a television camera, set in action from the boards by the pilot's fingers, ground unemotionally away, transferring the scene to magnetized steel tape.

Each of the four was recalling the same thing—a very ancient Martian manuscript, written in 6000 B. C. Earth time, an age when the civilization of which the Martian Sleepers were the last remnant was still in its prime. The manuscript, which had become well known on Earth through Dr. Sonnenblick's translation of 1988, recorded the invasion of the red planet by a horde of deadly metallic beings which the Martians

had called simply, the Metals. They had come from an artificial four-dimensional gate created by one of the monarchs of the time, and though they had eventually been defeated, the short war was so terrible that the old civilization never quite recovered from the blow. Soon afterward the thinning of the Martian air forced what remained of the peoples into suspended animation, in which condition Sir Christopher Barclay had discovered them in 1989. He had revived them, and thus there had been a first-hand check of the validity of the manuscript. It was all horribly true.

Xeum was the son of a Sleeper who had been a boy of ten Martian years when the invasion had occurred, and his own thoughts at this moment were the most unpleasant of all. Strauss' imagination was taking an almost equally frightening flight. During the course of the Lunar Revolt he had seen the neutronic inductor which Martin built in Tycho Crater. The neutronic inductor was very like the force-ray which was the chief weapon of the Metals. The thought drove his hands to the control board. Quickly he dove the ship to the shores of the acid sea and set it down at a point where a stony hill cut off direct view of the monstrous metropolis.

Xeum knew the Metals themselves at second hand; Strauss had seen the neutronic inductor fired at Detroit; and both Lane and Heath had lived just outside Detroit when Martin's ghastly blow struck the city. No, there were no particularly pleasant associations which these men made with the name of the race confronting them!

After a moment Xeum turned his back sharply and went below. The others paid no attention to him. "This is not so good," Strauss said softly. "We got into a hornet's nest when we came into this world. Anybody got any ideas of what we ought to do?"

"I have," Xeum said, reappearing as silently as he had left. He stalked across the turret and laid an armful of weapons on the chart table. "One heat pistol for each of us and a pencil-ray extra. I'm only sorry we didn't have the money to install naval guns in the ship."

"What's the idea?" said Strauss.

"Did you think I didn't know this was going to happen? Why do you suppose I organized this expedition? As soon as Heath propounded his theory of the other space beyond the sunspots I knew we'd find the Metals here. Wasn't the Topaz Gate a four-dimensional one? Didn't the Toro Rotal's manuscript say, 'They came from a space incredibly hidden, incredibly different, farther from man and his kind than the farthest galaxy?' Where else could that be but here?"

"And that's why you brought the arsenal?"

"YES. To destroy the damn things before they get another chance to get loose on the solar system again. Lord only knows how much more dangerous their civilization has grown in eight thousand years. I talked with Rotal's grandson, who's had access to a lot of data about the Metals Rotal didn't dare put in the manuscript. There's evidence of previous invasions of Mars—and of Earth too, I might add, although it's been almost entirely forgotten since the days of Mu. And—our time is short. Look at the activity of that city. They're preparing to break through again!"

There was dead silence for a minute. Finally Heath spoke. "It seems to me, Xeum," he said, "that you might have told us a little about this before we came. Four men with hand weapons against the Metals! I don't deny that it needs to be done, but—!"

"It's not quite that bad. They're a very social race. You've heard the Ganymedians say 'hac iklakic'? The good of the whole, the Rule of the Hive, as your Maeterlinck called it. That's their guiding principle; and they operate in concert, live in concert, and can be made to die the same way. That entire city—which is without any question the keystone of their civilization—operates from one power source. If we can find and destroy that before they catch us, the job will be done."

"I'm game," Strauss said immediately. "Maybe if I come back a hero people will start fighting to give me jobs. That will be a pleasant reversal of the usual procedure."

"Two in the hand gathers no moss, or something," Dr. Lane added. "As John says, it ought to be done. I suppose we'll have to make the best of our equipment."

"It's suicide," Heath warned. "Four against a whole world. But if everybody is agreed on trying to destroy the Metals, I won't hang back."

"Good," Xeum said, smiling. "I appreciate this, all of you; and though I'm

not speaking in any official capacity, I can say that if we come through alive, Mars won't forget the service."

HEATH, Lane and Xeum arrived at the airlock from different parts of the ship, each one in a spacesuit and carrying a heat-pistol. Strauss had been delegated to carry the pencil-ray, which was a small portable disintegrator invented by the Ganymedians. Xeum dialed the combination with quick, sure spatulate fingers, and the heavy inner door of the lock began to spin on its threads.

"Are you coming, Paul?" Heath called. "Yeah," the radio earphones responded. "Soon as I find my other boot."

The spinning of the lock ceased, and it swung out on massive gimbels. As the smaller shell-disk rolled aside, a terrific sulphur odor struck in, and they slammed shut their faceplates in haste. Simultaneously there was a quick, lightning-like flash of metal. It was gone before they could tell what it was, and as they looked about in astonishment, Strauss gave a startled yelp. Heath and Xeum raised their guns indecisively, but again the lightning was too quick for them, shooting past them and out of the ship again.

"What was that?" Xeum asked, dreading the answer.

"We forgot the little thing outside," Strauss' ragged voice came back. "What'd you do, let it in?"

"Yes. And out again. It moved so fast we didn't catch on to what was happening until it was gone," Heath responded. "Did it do any damage?"

"No. But it swiped the pencil-ray."

"The pencil-ray!"

"Yeah. It just snatched it off the chart table and dived out again. Must have been curious and wanted a souvenir." As he spoke the last words he appeared in the companionway, grotesque in his bulging spacesuit.

"I don't like that much," Xeum said. "Well, there's nothing we can do. They know we're here, anyhow. We'll just have to move faster, before they make up their minds we're out for blood. Let's go."

FOR the rest of their lives they bore the marks of that terrible odyssey through the city of the Metals on their brains. The enormous, night-black planet, with its volcanic mountains and bleak starlit desolation, was bad enough, but at least it had an element of the natural. The city was more than unnatural—it was a raving, shrieking defiance of all nature's laws. The height of the component buildings was in consonance with the Cyclopean scale of the world upon which they were built, yet to imagine living creatures building them stunned the mind. Everything was of metal—and to walk through those incredible streets and wonder which of the metal blocks and girders and plates were alive—to feel that the very walls were watching them with organs of senses which had nothing to do with sight—

They had walked into the city with the air of Christian martyrs walking toward a lion, guns raised, afraid of the incident which would surely show those guns useless, waiting for the alarm to sound which would bring shining shapes converging on them; but by the time they found what they were looking for they had learned to progress openly and with less fear. The flying cubes and spheres and cones—they could not help calling the latter soldiers, although they knew that since the Martian manuscript had been written they had probably lost their exclusively military function—ignored them completely, as if seeing no farther than their outer aspect, the metal shapes which were the spacesuits surrounding them. The masquerade had been unplanned, but it seemed effective.

There was a constant din and clamor about them which not even the insulation of the suits could cut out; a steady composite pounding in many alien rhythms, that set their pulses leaping irregularly in tempo and oppressed them with unnamable horror. The purposeful shapes bowled past them ceaselessly, flying with easy grace a few feet above the ground, a faint glow playing over their surfaces. Occasionally a flash of green fire from some invisible source lit the walls of the stupendous towers, and with it always came a sharp concussion which was not thunder. It was a little like the explosion wave of dinitron, but a dinitron flash is red. Strauss turned a little paler every time they heard it.

Rounding a turn, they saw the source of the phenomenon: a group of the cone-beings, flying about the tip of an incomplete building. From the tips of the cones the green lightning which was the force-ray blasted at intervals as new parts were

welded to the whole. The new parts were not hauled into place by cranes; they glided up by themselves, and hovered in place until the emerald bolts sealed them to their fellows. . . .

Other clangorous noises disclosed their sources as the four men moved on. A scarlet furnace set in a small clearing gave forth blinding light and a continuous roaring as metal parts for unknown machinery poured out of it. On the other side a narrow procession of living cubes filed unhesitatingly into the hungry maw, and Lane was reminded of the termite soldiers of Earth, whose heads form the nucleus of the cement barriers thrown up before an advancing enemy. The analogy was not complete, however, for the still-glowing parts which emerged from the flames swooped up and away of their own power, alive and unharmed. Inside, the blinding fires lent merciful obscurity to whatever blasphemous processes effected the metamorphosis.

In the dreadful fascination of this ear-assaulting, dream-like metropolis, in the common fear of the glowing shapes gliding endlessly by them, the four drove on the search for some weak point, some flaw in the ant-like social complex at which the feeble weapons they possessed could strike. And feeble indeed those weapons were; the proof of that, simple and short though it was, gave them one of the most terrifying moments of the whole expedition. Why Xeum's nervousness did not prove immediately fatal was a mystery; but the close-darting soldier that had frightened him into discharging his weapon reflected the blast of pure heat in a hundred glancing sparks and and shot past without a single motion to show it had even noticed the attack. They continued to wait grimly for a bolt of the green lightning until the unheeding Metal had vanished far down the street.

LANE heard Heath's voice over the incessant din and turned the helmet screws which would bring the 'phones closer to his ears.

"I said, what do you think keeps them flying?"

He watched a passing sphere, and noted for the first time that the faint glowing nimbus which surrounded the things was more intense on the groundward and rear sides. It was certainly not the effect of an AG field, and no geotronic mechanism could operate without involving prohibiitve polarisation difficulties where there would be so many of them. Neutronic induction was out; Martin had proven it reactionless, over howls of pain from every orthodox physicist in the system. He shrugged his shoulders, then realized that Heath could not see the gesture through the suit.

"I don't know," he said. Briefly he wondered what had happened to the poison-barbed tentacles that the Martian story had associated with the spherical Metals. There were a surprising number of modifications in the race for a period of eight thousand years. Perhaps they had been made through the agency of the furnace, for metal would seem a less pliable material for the evolutionary process to mold than flesh.

They were at the very heart of the city now—an enormous opening in the patterned arrangement of buildings, like a public square. They had noticed in every street they had visited a pipe-line-like effect of girders, lying end to end, branching at street corners and occasionally joined by others issuing from building walls. These girders glowed like every other metal object in the city, and were the obvious carriers of some electrical energy, yet they lat flat on the ground without visible insulation. Either the force they bore could not be grounded, or they were coated with an insulating layer of perfect transparency.

From every street these massive conduits issued out onto the square, joining at the very center in a radiating, many-pointed star. Over this junction a cubical monster presided, hovering over the point of intersection; and from beneath it a nebulous golden luster depended, enmeshing each shaft in a net of radiation which fluctuated constantly. Heath plucked at Lane's sleeve and pointed at the great pillar of light looming to the north, and he turned so that he could view it and this clearing-house of forces at the same time. Sure enough, the interplay of light within the cube's controlling web was matched exactly by subtle variations in the intensity of the yellow beam. So that was their power-source! Or was it merely a tapper? But what was it tapping? There was no

visible object, nothing which might act as a reservoir; the beam simply broke off at the far-away top. Surely all the energy necessary to keep this megapolis running could not be drawn from the air. Perhaps the actual power source was at the base of the ray, the ray itself only an exhaust; or—

"If you'll pardon the bad manners," said Xeum, who, like all Martians, possessed telepathic powers and an ethical tradition forbidding him to use them except in moments of extreme necessity, "I was trying to get a mental wave from one of those things and caught your question. It's my opinion that they tap the energy of the sun itself, directly through the warp."

Strauss made a lightning calculation. "That checks," he said. "The ray is the same height as the warp-limit here, assuming that the warp is dome-shaped."

"That's our goal, then," Lane said. "If we can smash that mechanism—"

"We'll have to be quick," Strauss called, sending a disquieted glance at the light-pillar. Lit faintly by that Titanic column, they could see the undersides of black, swirling clouds. Quickly their eyes raked the sky, and the danger was confirmed. There were no longer any stars in sight. A dull, deep rumbling joined the metallic clamor of the city, died away again as Strauss raised his voice. "I think we're going to have a storm." He was interrupted as the rumbling swelled abruptly, as if to add emphasis to his words, and exploded into a deafening thunderclap. "Lord," he said awedly. "It isn't going to rain acid, is it?"

Lane shook his head. "That's unlikely. But it'll be bad to be caught in it. If we get lost, and our batteries run down . . ." He shuddered at the thought. If he had to die, he would rather do it some other way than turning to a mushy red soup in the boots of an empty spacesuit.

"Come on, then," Xeum cried. "We know where to strike, now. Let's wipe this damned race off the planet, before the storm can stop us." Hastily the four turned back toward the street along which they had come. The ominous clouds pressed lower, surging around the yellow, mysterious beam, hiding over half of it. Once more the thunder pealed. . . .

CHAPTER IV

FLESH VS. METAL

STUDYING the peculiar gravitic strains which are born from its monstrous primary, Heath had spent a year in the constant monotonous drizzle of Ilanlacian Ganymede; Strauss had been with an IP station at Montbecque in French South Venus during the rainy season of that planet; both Xeum and Lane had been caught in the furious storm that drenches Lacus Solis on Mars once each four Earth years; but the violence of this upheaval stunned them all, and seemed to partake of the cyclonic rage of the sunspots. The rock beneath their feet quivered and shook to each thunderclap, and the skies were a black waterfall, releasing their steaming burdens in solid sheets. The wind drove the water against their backs, urging them toward the amphitheater at a stumbling, awkward run, and causing them to overbalance constantly in their heavy spacesuits. Often it would shift at a street corner and come charging with a monstrous playfulness around the opposite side of some building, lashing as powerfully at their faces as it had before at their backs. Their progress was a drunken reel, taking advantage of every slight shelter offered them. Slowly, inch by inch, they drew near the stadium of the light-pillar, and after an age were staggering from lee to lee of the oil-tank-like structures surrounding it. Over the fury of the elements a powerful, soporific hum was audible, coming from those structures, heard plainly each time the gloves of their suits touched the curving metal walls.

The great column of energy continued to bore unwaveringly into the turbulent clouds; and throughout the uproar, despite the raging of wind and water, the strange geometrical shapes of the Metals continued to glide through their streets unperturbed, going about their enigmatic tasks without any sign to acknowledge the elemental chaos which had engulfed them.

The storm reached its height as the four humans emerged from the shelter of the last building, and it proved impossible to cross the open area between it and the stadium. For a few yards they advanced heavily by opening their AG screens part way and plodding on at greatly increased

weight, but while this kept them on their feet, it threatened to wear away the last scraps of their fast-waning energies. Finally they were reduced to crawling, clawing their way from stone to stone, from outcropping to outcropping, back to the building again, to wait until a little of the storm waned.

Incessant crescendos of thunder boiled into the sulphurous sky, bursting and sending streamers of electric blue at the invisible horizon. The rain ran in gushing rivulets between the sharp rocks, and a vast angry hissing arose from the ocean. A dim scarlet glow to the north hinted at the sympathetic fury of volcanoes among the mighty mountain peaks; occasionally a shower of boiling mud cascaded down, and each raindrop that spattered on their faceplates left a little trail of dirt behind it. In this extremity Xeum at last drew upon the full powers of the aeon-old Martian race.

HE ESTABLISHED telepathic contact with all three others, making of his own mind a mental switchboard through which all could be heard, despite the terrible din which made radio impossible. "We'll have to wait," he radiated. "It can't keep this up long."

"I don't see any guards," Strauss put in. The Earthmen's "voices" had an odd quality, described in terms of sound inadequaterly as hissing and edgy. "Do you?"

"No," Xeum's brain radiated in clear, cold, bell-like tones. "One for all and all for one here—they wouldn't have them normally. Look, the mud's stopped flying; I can see the stadium a little." He surveyed the half-circle piercing the walls of the amphitheater. A cone-built soldier came to the very edge of visibility, darting from the palely-glowing area inside, made one graceful swoop which seemed to fulfill no purpose whatsoever, and ascended into the turbulent night. "That one must have seen us," he went on. "But it didn't try to block us. I'm fairly certain they think us a new form of their own species. Probably new forms are created regularly for special duties. Remember that furnace?"

"Yes," emanated Strauss. "Let's hope so."

"Don't shout."

"I didn't." They paused, and silence struck at them like a physical blow. The storm had stopped! No, not stopped entirely, for there was still a slow rain falling, but its violence was suddenly abated. The effect of this absolutely unheralded peace was more frightening than all the thundering. Xeum recovered the quickest of the four.

"Come on," he spoke aloud. "Now's our chance." Cautiously they walked forward toward the entrance, useless heat-guns sheathed. No force-ray struck them down as they went through; within the vast open area there was not a single Metal. At this distance the pillar of light was enormous, its lofty stretch without end. A sonorous humming, suggestive of power beyond calculation, came from the great machine in the center, and the light seemed a river of energy pouring down an invisible tube to it. Then there was a flicker of movement, and they crouched back against the wall.

It was one of the cubical varieties, which seemed everywhere to have replaced the globes in the positions of authority assigned to them by the Toro Rotal's history. It made its appearance from behind the mechanism, apparently from an entrance blocked to their view by the humming mass, and glided smoothly forward through the rain to a point about a hundred and fifty feet away. There it paused and hovered, while from its bottom face a tenuous haze of light dropped, very like the force-net they had seen used in the public square. The humming became deeper, and up the pale column of yellow fire towering directly overhead there shot a flicker of green. For a moment longer the Metal hung upon the heavy, wet, sulphurous air, as if satisfying itself that the ineffable work of the pillar was proceeding according to plan. Xeum felt a sudden flush of hatred of the too-perfect beauty of the thing, too regular to be allowed to live; and his momentarily unguarded mind broadcast the sensation in a hot eddy to his companions. Then the Metal rose straight up and drifted out over the walls of the amphitheater.

"Now!" Xeum hissed. "Control tablet directly under where the damned thing stopped. In the foundations. Now!"

THEY lumbered forward awkwardly. In those last crucial minutes a thousand things filled Xeum's mind, a thousand things so trivial and irrelevant that he concentrated upon them fiercely to keep him from remembering the consequences of fail-

ure; and once more that fierce concentration put them all in rapport with him. Chief among them was the mechanism of running in a spacesuit, always complicated because no matter how light the AG field made it, the suit was always heavier than the person wearing it. You teetered forward until the suit overbalanced; then you put one foot forward to prevent yourself falling on your face; then you put the other foot out to overbalance yourself again. After about forty feet of this you could congratulate yourself on having achieved a brewery-horse trot which was the limit of spacesuit speed under foot-power. The limitation gave you lots of time to think while you were making a crucial sprint. Lots of time to think about the few patients you had seen in Martian hospitals who had suffered horribly but not long under the Black Mold, and lots of time to think about the Martian manuscript which described the poison of the Metals as producing similar effects. Lots of time to think about the green force-ray, and how like Martin's neutronic inductor it was, and how Detroit had looked after Martin had fired the inductor at it. Lots of time to think about the green Earth and the antique beauties of Mars and the lush verdure of Venus swarming with the Metals. . . . Lots of time, while your pace seemed slower and slower as the need for speed became more pressing, slower and slower, and you kept thinking lots of time, lots of time, when really there was not nearly enough time, and it seemed that surely you couldn't go any slower without stopping, and then you realized that you had stopped, dead—

Stopped dead a bare two yards from the control tablet, the four men stood, the metal boots of their spacesuits rotted to the stone, their bodies swaying and straining forward frantically, every muscle striving to move, and unable to stir an inch farther.

Trapped!

CHAPTER V

THE COMEDY UNVEILED

OF XEUM'S heartsickness at the realization no words could or should speak. So deep was the psychic shock that it left him no feelings to fit to the appearance of the Metal sphere which hovered suddenly before them, glowing faintly, surveying each of them in turn. He felt the impact of its eyeless regard, and the faint chilling current, like a mild electrical shock, of the four pale golden streamers which it radiated to their helmets. His earphones rang to the soundless pulsing of the light.

" We had hoped you would not attempt this destruction," the even, colorless voice said. "It becomes necessary now to take notice of you."

As they digested in silence the stunning implication, a fifth tentril of force propogated like a psuedopod from the parent aura and caressed the control table. In answer a long rectangular section of rock to the left began to rise, lid-like, exposing a gently slanting metal-walled corridor which was suffused with a golden glow.

"Enter," the sphere said. Xeum had no vital urge left in his heart. He stepped forward.

Instantly he was seized by the light and borne forward, and he knew that his companions had been caught up as well. The sphere bowled past him and went on ahead. The walls of this long tunnel were a part of the city, and alive like the sphere; the glow surrounded them, and, streaming back off their spacesuits in crackling ribbons, impelled them on. The Earthmen's hair was standing on end with the electrostatic tension. Numbly Xeum caught a thought-wave from Heath, who was automatically cataloguing the observed facts and deducing from them a solution to the puzzle of the Metals' method of locomotion. They ionized the particles of the air passing over their surfaces and ejected them at high speeds—a rocket effect. This, too, explained the curious mutations from the direct course which marked the movements of the soldiers. The assymetric angles of which they were composed gave them less control over the balancing of the ion streams. With dull eyes he watched the progress of the sphere preceding them.

The passage continued to slant inexorably downward into the depths of the black planet. Had they passed beneath the edge of the warp? They could not tell; the shining monotony of the walls made it impossible to judge how far they had come. Then, abruptly, the passage debouched into an enormous domed cavern, and the leading sphere shot up and away, leaving them imprisoned by the forces which had first halted their pitiful attack. Before them a new enigma reared itself in endless multiplication.

Racked up tier upon tier to the very

back of the great chamber were rows of small metal crystals. Lane tried to understand the meaning of this new manifestation of the city's mystery. The crystals did not all glow. Only a comparatively small section high up on the left and a corresponding one on the other side were pulswith the lambent force which was life to the Metals. He thought of the lobes of a great brain, and knew that the analogy had come of itself, but had been prompted by the vital energies flowing around him. The other crystals were dark and silvery, like freshly-cut platinum. After a moment a single crystal near them flashed into life, and from it reached the four-fold tentacle of light like that the sphere had used for communication.

"IT has been long and long since we have called upon this memory-cell," the earphones commented emotionlessly.

"Can you hear me?" Heath asked abruptly in a choked voice.

"We hear you."

"Why do you say 'we?'"

"We are the race, or that unit of it which forms this particular settlement. What you see before you is the racial memory, preserved in these crystals as fatigue-flaws preserve the memory of strain in dead metal. Each crystal is a cell retaining information culled from past experience."

"Well," Strauss growled belligerently. "You've got us. What now?"

This seemed a puzzling question. Lane's heart stopped while it remained unanswered. At last the xanthic beams throbbed again. "We stole your one dangerous weapon, the projector of atomic disintegration which you call the pencil-ray. We did not think that you would be able to do further harm; but it seems that you were prepared to tamper with the source of our life. Is destruction a natural impulse to you?"

Xeum swore softly. "After what you did on Mars and Earth, you can ask us that?"

"But so many millions of years ago," the crystal said, in slow wonder. "Do you seek vengeance, then, for races and planets long dead?"

There was stunned silence. Then, after an eternity, the very air about the four humans began to vibrate and tremble with a half-heard, half-felt sound of soul-withering quality and import—

Laughter!

"Let us explain," the Metal brain said above that paeon of cosmic mirth. "When you came through the warp, you were not shifted in space or hyper-space. You moved in time. Had you forgotten that time is also a manifestation of the fourth dimension? You remained in exactly the same location. You are on the sun, and have been on the sun since you penetrated the sunspot. The sunspots are not pockets in space; they are islands in time. You were thrown forward down the ages to this period, when the sun has cooled to this vast dark planet, where we make our home. Your solar system has been cold and dead for more years than you can comprehend.

"YOU thought to defend against us a society which no longer exists anywhere in this galaxy; your concern was for organic life which has moved long ago to Andromneda and left us undisputed masters of the Milky Way. True, we made a series of raids upon your civilization in the dim past, but we were a young and immature race then. Such a course would be unthinkable now. Did our soldiers frighten you into this fear for your people? They are of little use now; the heavy labor which they do can be more efficiently performed by others; but we have allowed the type to persist because it is rather a pretty one."

Heath felt a shock that these things should be conscious of beauty, and the laughter swelled again in response. "Why not? A man of your own imperfectly constructed race once said that the shape-giving principle of all sentient beings is artistic. Geometry is, after all, the basic stuff of beauty."

"This has all been a comic mistake on our part," Heath said. "But why didn't you tell us at first?"

"The energy of the city is carefully alloted. We did not wish to expend any in dealing with you until it was absolutely necessary. In any case, we bear you no malice. Self-preservation is a universal law of living things of whatever substance, and race-preservation its greatest corollary." A second cell glowed abruptly and sent a bow of light arching to the first. "Our history records the attack on the Martian monarchy as the last, so you need fear no further encroachments upon our part in your own age. The sun, then as now, was only a gateway which helped us to leave the other space where we were born; we are only stepchildren of your great star,

and it is given to no race but our own to touch our real home except through the Topaz Gate—a secret now lost, fortunately, forever. You will not see us again." There was a short pause, and the second cell faded into dark inanimate metal once more.

"And now, we ask that you leave. Your presence here upsets the budgeting of energy—energy which, since it is drawn from a source a hundred million years in the past, must be retained at a very delicate balance. We released a little of the restraining screen which guards us against the forces which leak through the warp as soon as you arrived, so that you would not blunder through it accidentally and be killed. Thus you have a visual marking of the location of the warp, and should have no difficulty in finding your original point of ingress. Yes, poor weak fleshy ephemerids! We guarded your life while you sought, unsuspected as you thought, to destroy ours!"

The great chamber of the Metal brain rocked and reeled with laughter.

DR. Lane stood by a forward port while Strauss lifted the ship gently from the shore of the acid sea. Slowly the black landscape receded; a blurring film obscured it as the ship's protective screens came on. His tired eyes sought out the glowing miracle of the city of the Metals, dwindling gradually to an emerald and gold spot upon the velvet darkness. A hundred new questions of science thronged into his mind, but they were questions the answers for which he knew he now had no opportunity to hear, and he brushed them aside. For several minutes he stood silently, watching until Strauss' fingers touched a stud and the shutters began to slide closed in front of his face, cutting off his last view of the island in time. He shrugged his shoulders and turned away, smiling faintly.

"Be it ever so humble," he said, "it's worth two in the bush."

"Or something," Heath added for him.

The silver torpedo rose more swiftly now, and the dense, humid air, laden with its acrid burden of brimstone, began to whistle about it. For a breathless instant it seemed to hover—a burst of intolerable flame—

It was gone, and darkness and the Metals ruled the dying sun once more. The solar comedy was closed.

THE END

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THE SPRING MACHINE

Illustration by Musacchia



by FREDERICK A. KUMMER, JR.

(Author of "Day of the Titans," "Isles of the Blest," etc.)

Professor Honeyby had secretly hoped *that the "spring machine"* would make his personality a little more pronounced. But —it seemed there was no change—until every woman he passed fell madly in love with him.

THE private research laboratory was a maze of bewildering machinery. Wires, tubes, queerly-shaped bits of metal were inextricably tangled in a *Laocoon-like* snarl that suggested the fruits of an amour between a reckless Tesla coil and an incautious hodoscope. Weird-looking as was this scientific monstrosity, it brought a glow of pride to the eye of its creator, Pro-

fessor Homer C. Honeyby. Tightening the last nut into place, he stepped back a pace and gazed at his brain-child with soulful fervor.

"Miss Woodbine!" he called. "It's finished! At last!"

In the outer office Miss Henrietta Woodbine laid aside her copy of *Searing Love Stories* and, all efficiency, entered the laboratory. She was precisely the sort of secretary one would have expected Professor Honeyby to employ. A spinster of the thin and flattish variety, she nevertheless betrayed remnants of past attractiveness, particularly when blushing, which was chronic. Beneath her armor-plate of inhibitions she cherished dreams of dark, dangerous men, moonlit balconies, and the soft strumming of guitars. Even Professor Honeyby, though anything but dark and dangerous, occupied a place of long-smothered affection within her maidenly brea....ahem!....chest.

Entering the laboratory, Miss Woodbine clasped rapturous hands, gazed ecstatically at the confusion of wires.

"Oh....Professor!" she breathed. "It's wonderful! And *you're* wonderful to have made it!" A blush at her own boldness crossed her cheek. "What exactly does it do?"

"One cannot be sure," Professor Honeyby said gravely. "The machine is unique." He assumed his best lecture-course manner. "I hope that its emanations, its vibrations to be more correct, will greatly stimulate the output of certain of the ductless glands. If successful, it will mark a milestone in the history of medicine. Indeed, it may create tremendous changes in the personality of those exposed to its rays. There are certain mysterious impulses, like the Burger brain-wave, given off by all persons. And these impulses are, I contend, directly the result of glandular secretions. Stimulate the ductless glands and these 'personality impulses' may be stepped up until the subject's influence upon other persons is greatly increased, just as thyroid extract may change a fat slovenly individual to a dynamo of energy, or sex hormones may increase one's attraction."

Miss Woodbine's cheeks became positively incandescent.

"I....I see," she murmured. "I certainly hope your machine is a complete success, professor."

"That," he said, drawing himself up to a full five-foot-seven, "I shall soon determine. You must leave me now, Miss Woodbine. Since I do not know just what the device's effects may be, I cannot permit you to take any risks."

"Oh!" she whispered. "But you...."

"I am a scientist," Professor Honeyby said firmly. "No risk can deter me!" With a bow that would have done credit to a grand duke, he showed her to the door.

A student of psychology, watching, might have fathomed the professor's soul from that bow. It spoke of a smothered yearning for romance quite equal to that of Miss Woodbine. There were times when Professor Honeyby forgot his forty-odd eventless years, forgot his small stature, thinning grey hair, and thick-lensed glasses. At such times his desire to be a swashbuckling hero of the Don Juan type would be manifested in a courtly bow, or, when he felt especially daring, a mild compliment. Such moments, however, were all too rare. Normally, Professor Honeyby was sadly aware of his meek, colorless appearance, his overwhelming shyness, and an inferiority complex that was without equal. Never once in nearly a half century had he so much as held a female hand; and his dreams of being a bold Lothario were buried beneath the weight of scientific research. To be sure, the "C" which was his middle initial, stood for Casanova, but this bit of whimsy on the part of his parents he zealously concealed, knowing what the student body at the University would make of it.

With the departure of Miss Woodbine to her sanctum, Professor Honeyby banished any irrelevant thoughts from his mind. This, he realized, was a great moment. Perhaps the greatest of his life. The test of the machine he had labored over for five years! If it succeeded in stimulating the ductless glands, numerous diseases, countless glandular disorders would vanish before its rays. Honor, fame, perhaps a Nobel prize, awaited him. Fingers trembling, eyes glowing with scientific fervor, Professor Honeyby tugged at the main switch.

A DULL drone arose from the complex apparatus. Tubes glowed, moving parts clicked, sparks sputtered. Then from a round glass projector a beam of rich golden light swept, forming a brilliant cone of illumination. Professor Honeyby stared at it eagerly. This was the ray which should stimulate the glandular output, step up the "personality impulses" that originate in the brain. Slight shoulders squared, pale eyes

blinking with determination, the professor strode into the cone of golden light.

Its effects were disappointing. To be sure, there was a tingling sensation that ran through his limbs, a feeling of queer exhilaration that made him think of Pan, spring, and dryads....but beyond this he seemed unchanged. Stepping from the ray some ten minutes later, Professor Honeyby gazed eagerly at himself in the laboratory mirror. Instead of the change he had hoped for, the same meek and apologetic face, with its thin grey hair and receding chin, stared back at him. The professor sighed. No spectacular effects after all Still, it was harmless, and that was something.

"All right, Miss Woodbine," he called, rather dejectedly 'you can come in and take my notes on the experiment, now. I...I'm afraid it was a failure!"

The door of the laboratory opened hesitantly and Miss Woodbine entered, her hands fluttering.

"Oh, Professor," she murmured. "I was so frightened...." Her voice trailed off into silence, her face took on a rapt expression as she stared at the little, meek man.

"What is it, Miss Woodbine?" he asked, sensing something foreign in her manner.

Miss Woodbine's eyes were glowing with an unaccustomed fervor. A tremendous sigh escaped her, and she swayed lissomly in his direction.

"Oh!" she whispered huskily. "Homer! My soul-mate! Come to me, Homer! Come to me, my own true love!"

For one long incredulous moment Professor Honeyby stared at her. A pink flush spread about his gills.

"My....my dear Miss Woodbine!" he gasped. "You are unwell. I think you had better go home, get some rest...."

"And leave you, Homer? Never!" Miss Woodbine was quoting, with some success, from *Searing Love Stories.* A wildly determined expression had come over her usually placid and rabbit-like features; arms outstretched, she advanced toward Professor Honeyby with a slow and sinuous step that made him think of a tiger stalking its prey.

The professor passed a hand over his brow. Either he or his secretary was mad; it was hard to say which. Then, as Miss Woodbine hurtled forward like a Notre Dame linesman, sought to enfold him lovingly in a sweeping embrace, he gave a shocked and bewildered cry and hastily retreated behind his desk, cringing.

"My man!" Miss Woodbine breathed with passion. "My Homer! You'll never escape me now! We will fly away together!" She chivvied him around the desk, eyes aflame, a new panther-woman.

BACK-PEDALING rapidly, Professor Honeyby sought to reason with her. Miss Woodbine was long past reason. A lean and angular dryad, she continued her hot pursuit, cooing words of endearment. The professor glanced wildly about, like a hunted thing. If someone were to enter the laboratory, his reputation was ruined. In one frenzied leap he cleared the desk, and, breaking free of the arms that coyly encircled his neck, sprang through the doorway of the laboratory. Before the impassioned Miss Woodbine could overtake him, he had slammed and bolted the door.

Free from pursuit, Professor Honeyby leaned against the wall, mopping his brow. His glasses had slid down his nose, his fading hair was rumpled, his head was spinning. The world seemed suddenly to have turned topsy-turvy. First his gland-stimulation machine had proven, after five years work, a dismal failure....and now the prim, meek Miss Woodbine had gone completely insane. He could hear her pounding against the panels and calling to him in pleading purple terms that even the editors of *Searing Love Stories* might have questioned. Professor Honeyby shivered. Help....he had to get help.... A doctor to diagnose her case, quiet her.... Snatching up his antiquated hat, Professor Honeyby dashed into the corridor.

As Miss Woodbine's endearments died away, the professor's blood-pressure returned to normal. The incident was unfortunate, but with medical care, a rest for her nerves, she might well recover

At the door Professor Honeyby met the robust, red-faced charwoman, mopping up the front steps. He paused, coughed embarrassedly.

"Ah....Mrs. Halloran....my...uh... secretary, Miss Woodbine, has had an attack of some sort. She is...ah...extremely violent. Don't let anyone enter my laboratory until I get back with a doctor."

The charwoman dropped her mop, gazed at him with adoration.

"Anything you say, Professor. Anything!" She gave a tremulous sigh. "Sure, just the other day I was thinking that a poor lone widow-woman like me would make a fine

wife for the right man! And it being spring and all!" Mrs. Halloran moved toward him, a dangerous glint in her eye. "It's a broth of a man ye are, professor, an' it's wasting away I am for a kiss...."

A gasp of horror broke from Professor Honeyby's lips. One look at Mrs. Halloran's two hundred pounds bearing down upon him, and he fled. Rounding a corner, he paused, gasping for breath. First Miss Woodbine and then Mrs. Halloran! Incredible that they both should go crazy, but....

AT THAT moment Professor Honeyby became aware....annoyingly aware of queer glances cast in his direction. With a shy man's horror of being conspicuous, he glanced at himself in a plate-glass shop window. His meek, nervous face was somewhat distraught, but otherwise he seemed intact. Yet every woman who passed him on the crowded sidewalk was strangely affected. Some stared longingly, some sighed soulfully, others whispered to one another, pointing. A tiny tot of about five skipped up to him. "Nice mans," she announced. "Nice mans!"

Professor Honeyby groaned. Why didn't people leave him alone? Was it possible that his machine had been a success....too great a success? Suppose by stimulating the ductless glands, he had at the same time tremendously increased the mysterious emanations that determine one's personal charm. There were people who by merely entering a room dominated everyone else in it.... and history held many examples of ugly men who were, by sheer force of personality, overwhelmingly attractive to the opposite sex. If his own emanations, hitherto nil, had been stimulated, stepped up to undreamed-of proportions, he could understand....He'd been turned into a modern Don Juan, a second Valentino....

The professor glanced wildly about. A knot of women shoppers, old and young, had begun to gather about him, worshipping. Had Robert Taylor and Clark Gable walked by, arm in arm, it is doubtful if they would have received a passing glance. Men also were stopping, now, to determine the cause of the congestion. The circle of admirers was growing momentarily and Professor Honeyby, back against the wall, felt like a sheep at bay. Murmurs arose from the crowd of women. "Handsome!" "What a man!" "Wonderful!"

A buxom blonde, not content to admire at a distance, swayed toward him. "My dream boy!" she whispered. "All my life I've waited for this moment! I...I... think I'm going to faint!" Closing her eyes, she went into a well-executed swoon, aimed in his direction. Instead of collapsing lovingly into his arms, however, the blonde sat down heavily upon the pavement. Professor Honeyby, frantic, had sidestepped, was bent only on flight. With a frenzied yell, he plunged forward, broke through the circle that hemmed him in. Soft voices, clutching hands, sought to restrain him, but, animated by the strength of despair, he shook them off took to his heels.

Panting, bewildered, Professor Honeyby ran blindly, heedless of the curious gazes folowing him. Escape....escape from this nightmare....was all that gripped his mind. The sign of a five-and-ten ahead brought inspiration. He ducked furtively into the store, headed for the novelty counter.

"D-dark glasses," he stuttered. "And a false black beard. For my nephew's birthday," he added, smiling inanely. "The little chap likes to play detective...."

The red-haired girl behind the counter stared at him queerly, noting his hunted look. Suddenly she leaned forward, whispering melodramatically.

"I know you're a gangster, a public enemy," she hissed. "But I don't care! I've always wanted to meet a desperado like you! Someone who'd beat me, crush me, love me!" She bent over the counter, fiercely imploring. "Take me with you! Anywhere! I'll be your moll, your servant, your slave! Take me...."

Professor Honeyby blinked, muttered incoherently, and fled. Gaining the sun-swept street again, he turned up his collar, pulled down his hat, and slunk nervously toward an alley. If, by making his way along side-streets, he could reach home....

A BEARDED, broad-shouldered man and an exquisitely dressed woman with dark, exotic features, passed him. Professor Honeyby stared. It was Nita Nowina, the famous ballerina, in town for her annual dance recital. For years the professor had attended her performances, had admired her savage beauty from afar. Now, to be face to face with her! He forgot even the harrowing events of the past hour in the thrill of the moment.

Under the professor's wide-eyed gaze, the

ballerina paused, an intent smouldering look crossing her countenance. With the stiff slow step of a sleepwalker, she advanced toward him.

"You!" she whispered in husky, impassioned tones. "You! Ah, so long I haf dreamed of someone like you! And to theenk, here on the street of thees little town, I at last meet my dream!" She sighed volcanically. "You theenk I am bold, yes? To spik to you so? Eet is not me who spiks....eet is the lover witheen me calling to eets mate! Could I let you pass, go out of my life, when I haf hoped so long to find you? Ah, but you weel learn to lov me, my leetle *dushinka!* My kisses weel tell you how moch...."

"I....I....my dear madam....you see it's all a mistake!" Professor Honeyby stammered unhappily. "I built a machine, and—"

His dark face twisted with rage, the dancer's black-bearded companion bore down upon the professor with menacing, Rasputin-like gestures.

"Machine?" he hissed. "What ees thees talk of a machine? For five years I haf love thees so-beautiful Nita Nowina and now you....you, an eensignificant leetle snake from the grass, come between us! Be quiet, Nita!" He swept aside the tragic ballerina. "I, Porfiry Tashikoff Petrovitch, weel crrrrush every bone in hees body! I weel tear heem into a thousand so-tiny beets! I weel keel heem! Now!"

The professor tried to call for help, but only a feeble squeak left his throat. The fiery Porfiry pounced, a look of fierce neanderthal joy on his shaggy countenance. Gripping Honeyby with one hand, he drew back a hirsute and hamlike fist. The professor groaned. A fist fight in the middle of Main Street! Even if he survived the impending mayhem, his career at the University was irrevocably finished! An abject figure, he waited for the manslaughter to commence.

At that moment two stoutish ladies carrying shopping bags rounded the corner. In a single startled glance they surveyed the scene, then, with one accord, fell upon the sputtering Porfiry and, aided by Nita Nowina, dragged him away. Honeyby gasped his relief.

"I—I'm most deeply indebted to you," he murmured. "This—this madman attacked me!"

"Attacked you? *You?"* The taller of the two women gazed at him with soulful, setter-like eyes. "The scoundrel!" She advanced a step toward the professor. "You know, it's curious, but the moment I laid eyes on you, I felt strangely attracted, as though...."

PROFESSOR HONEYBY knew the symptoms by now.

"Very grateful," he muttered. "Important engagement. So sorry." Tipping his hat, he strode hastily up the street.

Nita Nowina, however, was not so easily shaken off.

"No!" she cried. "You cannot leave me, my *dushinka!* I weel not let you go! Ah, you are so cruel!" With swirl of velvet and furs, she set out after him, followed by the two stout ladies, who apparently felt it their duty to protect the professor from this hussy, and from the inflammable Porfiry, still breathing threats of homicide as he brought up the rear.

To Professor Honeyby what followed was a nightmare. Chased down Main Street by an exotic ballerina, two buxom matrons, and a vengeful Russian! Already heads were popping out of windows, people were staring curiously at the procession. Groaning, the professor increased his speed.

In and out of traffic, around corners, through crowds of shoppers, the chase continued. Others were joining in, now. Women, mainly, succumbing to curiosity and the professor's fatal fascination. They were joined almost at once by several children, a dog, and two perspiring policemen. Heart pounding, breath coming in gasps, Honeyby glanced over his shoulder. Women and more women, of every size, shape, and age, with Nita Nowina in the lead, calling to him in endearing terms. And he had dreamed of being a Lothario, a Don Juan! His personality emanations stepped up by the machine, he was a lodestone, a magnet, attracting women with a single glance! What sort of future was there for him? Desert isles, monasteries, a hermitage....these alone would give him peace to work! Impossible to go on like this, with women hurling themselves incessantly at him!

Like land to a shipwrecked mariner, University Park loomed before the professor's gaze. Here, in the shrubbery, he might find refuge, a chance to escape... He swept through the entrance, banking for the turn, vaulted a hedge, and set out along the bridle path, passing several cantering horses as

though they were standing still. Behind him, his feminine pursuers were in full cry, with Nita Nowina giving the view halloo. Professor Honeyby, stripped by now of his civilized veneer, reverted to the primitive. Leaping upward with a surprisingly Tarzan-like agility, he caught the low-hanging branch of an oak, drew himself into its sheltering foliage. Gaining a comfortable fork, he had just settled himself against the trunk when the pursuing pack streamed along the path, hot on his trail. Nita Nowina, the flame-breathing Porfiry, and the two stout ladies, ran interference, followed by the policemen and as varied a collection of feminine pulchritude as the professor had ever witnessed. For just an instant, as they passed beneath the tree, Nita Nowina hesitated, then, borne on by the rush, she disappeared.

"Screwy!" one of the policemen panted. "Why all these dames want to chase one little masher, beats me! He couldn't of tried to get fresh with 'em all."

"Must be some man," the other wheezed. "The foreign-looking dame acts like she was nuts about him. And if that Rooshan guy ever gets his meat-hooks on him. . . ."

THE conversation died out as they pounded along the trail in furious pursuit. The hue and cry faded into the distance, and Professor Honeyby shivered. A masher! If he had been recognized, his job was lost! Besides, what could the future hold, now that he gave out these irresistible emanations? Impossible to avoid all contact with women for the rest of his life. And if one so much as passed within ten feet of him, he was lost. A life in which he would be continuously harassed by passionate females, the center of jealous quarrels, beset by irate husbands! Terrifying to any man, let alone one who desired peace and quiet to devote to science. His only recourse, apparently, was to become a gigolo, a career which jealous rivals would no doubt soon end. Sick with despair, his persecution complex increasing momentarily, the professor sank back against the tree trunk. Perhaps, if he waited until the streets were deserted, he might, under cover of darkness, reach home . . .

Hours lumbered by like snails in full flight. The professor was stiff from unusual exertion, cramped from his awkward position. The gloaming brought young lovers strolling arm-in-arm through the soft blue half-light. As they passed the oak tree, the feminine halves of these couples exhibited reactions that set the professor's teeth chattering. His rampant personality operated, it seemed, even from his lofty perch; without knowing why, these ladies all wanted to linger about the base of the tree. One girl stretched her arms upward in the manner of a tempestuous, soul-hungry nymph.

"Spring!" she murmured rapturously. "Spring! I can almost hear the pipes of Pan! Dryads and centaurs dancing in the moonlight! Take this old oak, for instance there might be a satyr hiding in its branches right now!" She moved toward the tree. "It's as though some spell hung over this glade! Can't you feel it, Henry? The call of spring. . . .of mystery. . . .of love?"

"All I can feel is a cold coming on," her escort sniffed. "It's damp. Let's go get some dinner."

"Dinner!" the girl said scathingly. "That's the trouble with you, Henry. You don't *feel* things. Things like love and romance. This is the sort of night when I might find my dream man. And instead, I'm stuck with you! An unfeeling, cold-blooded, always-hungry. . . ."

THEY left, vituperate, and Professor Honeyby sighed relief. As time wore on, however, the strolling couples became fewer. He clung to his roost, exhausted. A short nap until, say, midnight, and he'd try to sneak home. But sleep in a tree was a simian custom which, he found, required practice. After almost falling twice, he descended cautiously and, stealing a wary look around, dove into a clump of rhododendrons nearby. Here, worn out by his chase, the nervous strain of the past few hours, Professor Honeyby fell into an uneasy, nightmare-haunted sleep.

Bright daylight, filtering through his herbaceous shelter, aroused the professor with a start. He peered stealthily through the rhododendron leaves, groaned. It was morning. In the distance nursemaids were wheeling baby carriages. He had overslept! And now he was forced once more to run a feminine gauntlet in order to reach home! Memory of the day before terrified him, but the gnawing in the pit of his empty stomach could not be denied. At that moment a stout park policeman hove into view, swinging his nightstick, whistling. Like a

homing pigeon, Professor Honeyby emerged from concealment, ripping his trousers in the process, and raced desperately toward the cop.

The patrolman, catching sight of this disreputable figure, frowned in olympian displeasure.

"Gwan!" he said, flourishing his club. "Scram! This ain't no place for bums!"

"But you don't understand! I'm Professor Honeyby of the University! And I need your help!" He shuddered as two nursemaids, pushing perambulators, approached. "You've got to escort me home, keep the women away! Everywhere I go they chase me, bother me, try to. . . . to make love to me! One look at me and they go crazy! I demand police protection!"

The patrolman glanced at the cringing, miserable figure, shook a ponderous, melancholy head. "Sure," he murmured. "Sure, I see. They mob you, like you was Robert Taylor, and I'm to beat 'em off! Well, come along, Casanovy. Cleopatra and Helen of Troy are waiting to have a nice long talk with you." He chuckled, waved his nightstick at the two nursemaids. The professor groaned, knowing what would happen when they got within range of his personality waves; but with the cop's large hand gripping his shoulder, there was no escape.

"'Lo, Hilda! 'Lo, Molly!" Officer Clancy grinned at the two girls. "Git ready for a heartbreak! This here collar-ad just told me how the dames can't resist him, how one look from his peepers sends 'em leaping at him with yells of joy! So be careful!" He chuckled.

The two nursemaids studied the professor's bedraggled figure, but there was no sign of tender emotion on their faces.

"Nutty!" one of them said. "Bugs! Shame on you, Mister Clancy, making fun of the poor, half-witted thing!"

PROFESSOR HONEYBY, who had been trying to hide behind Clancy's rotund figure, gave a gasp of surprise. No traces of love or adulation about either of them! A gleam of hope came into his eyes. Suppose the effects of his machine, the stimulation of the ductless glands and, as a result, the staggering increase of his personality emanations, had worn off! If the strange and abnormal state was only temporary, lasting but a few hours, he was saved!

"Thank God!" he exclaimed fervently. "At last!" With a sudden leap he broke from the policeman's grip, set out toward the entrance of the park.

"Hey! Stop, you! Hey!" Clancy's bovine waddle, however, could not keep pace with the little professor's new-found ability as a sprinter. Borne on by the wings of joy, Honeyby fairly flew. Free of this terrible curse, able to move unhampered through life! The women he passed in the park merely stared disapprovingly at him and the professor chuckled happily. Let others be Don Juans and Lotharios. . . . he was cured. Back to his life of quiet research, repose. Suddenly he thought of Miss Woodbine, locked in his laboratory. She would be normal, now he had lost his personality step-up, and must be released. Issuing from the park, he hailed a cab, set out on his errand of mercy.

Mrs. Halloran was scrubbing the steps as his cab drew up. At sight of the professor she merely bent lower, her face a bright scarlet. Honeyby raced toward his office. Poor Miss Woodbine must be in a state of nervous collapse by now. . . .

As he approached the laboratory door, a dull drone was audible from within. Suddenly pale, the professor drew back the bolt, burst into the room. There, standing beneath the cone of golden light that poured from the stimulation machine, was Miss Woodbine!

Professor Honeyby stared, blinking. Visions of nymphs and satyrs floated past his eyes, the trill of Pan's pipes sounded in his ears. Miss Woodbine was no longer his prim and angular secretary. She was Salome, Madame DuBarry, Delilah. Dazzled, gasping, he plunged toward her, a satyr-like gleam in his eye. Spring had come again!

"Henrietta!" he cried feverishly. "My beloved! My little dove!"

"Oh. . . Homer!" she fell languishing into his arms. "Homer!"

SOME moments later Professor Honeyby disentangled himself from her tender half-nelson, drew himself up to a dominant five-foot-seven. "We," he announced firmly, "are going to be married! Now! Come along!"

"But. Homer!" Miss Woodbine blushed modestly. "This is so sudden! I. . . . I. . . ."

"Now!" the professor insisted, suddenly a caveman for all his meek exterior. "I've been wanting to for years and now nothing

can stop me! Nothing! You are my soul mate! My dream girl! My goddess! Let's get going!"

"Oh, Homer!" she sighed faintly. "You're so masterful!"

Melted by his fervent wooing, Miss Woodbine allowed herself to be bundled into a taxi.

"The City Hall!" Professor Honeyby barked.

"Right!" The cabby glanced back at the stepped-up Miss Woodbine, shook a wistful head. "Gee! Some guys got all the luck!"

Miss Woodbine's entrance into the City Hall was in the nature of a triumph. As though affixed to a single lever, the heads of every male within sight turned toward her. Several clerks arose from their desks, a derbied ward-heeler found himself trying to find a rhyme for "sweetie," while two elevator operators glared with rabid jealousy at the professor. Only the latter's masterful frown kept them at a distance. Dazzled, bewildered, but happy, Miss Woodbine made her triumphant way along the hall.

At the Marriage License window the clerk in charge stared at her with the startled gaze of a golfer watching his first hole-in-one.

"License?" he mumbled. "Listen, wonderful, you don't want to marry this mug. Think it over, wait. Have lunch with me and I'll show you that there're other guys who'd be happy to...."

Professor Honeyby pounded the counter.

"You make out that license!" he grated. "Or I'll see the mayor! I'll sue the city! I'll have you discharged! This lady and I want to get married! Quick!"

Torn between love and duty, the clerk sadly obeyed. When ten minutes later they reached a conveniently nearby church, the minister took one look at the glamorous Miss Woodbine and a highly unecclesiastical gleam came into his eye. Arriving at the "speak-now-or-forever-hold-your-peace" section of the ceremony, he paused hopefully, but with no interruption forthcoming, he sighed and in a manner more suggestive of a funeral than a wedding, proceeded to knot the bonds. Leaving the good man in a state of permanent and tearful heartbreak, Mrs Homer Casanova Honeyby took her husband's arm and left the church, glowing.

"Married!" she breathed. "Oh, Homer, where....where do we go now?"

The professor watched two hucksters, a chauffeur, and the major portion of a WPA street-repair gang, all gravitate toward his blushing bride, their expressions soulful, adoring. Two motorists, craning their necks to catch a glimpse of her, collided with a crumpling of fenders. A Chinese laundryman, bent beneath his load of wash, stopped and began to express admiration in his native tongue.

"Go?" Professor Honeyby exclaimed. "We're going somewhere where you won't see another man for the next twelve hours!" He cast a scathing glance at the crowd of vulpine, predatory males, dragging his bride toward a beauty shop down the street.

"Get everything!" he snapped. "From hair-do to toenails! And when you're through, start the whole works all over again! You're not going to leave here until the effects of those damned rays have worn off!"

"But....but....Homer!" she quavered. "What are you going to do?"

"I," he said sadly but firmly, "am going home and smash up five years' patient work! I'm cured! And no wife of mine is going to be a man-magnet! Think what kind of a world this would be if I made that thing public! In the interests of our social structrue, the machine must go! It's dynamite!"

THE END

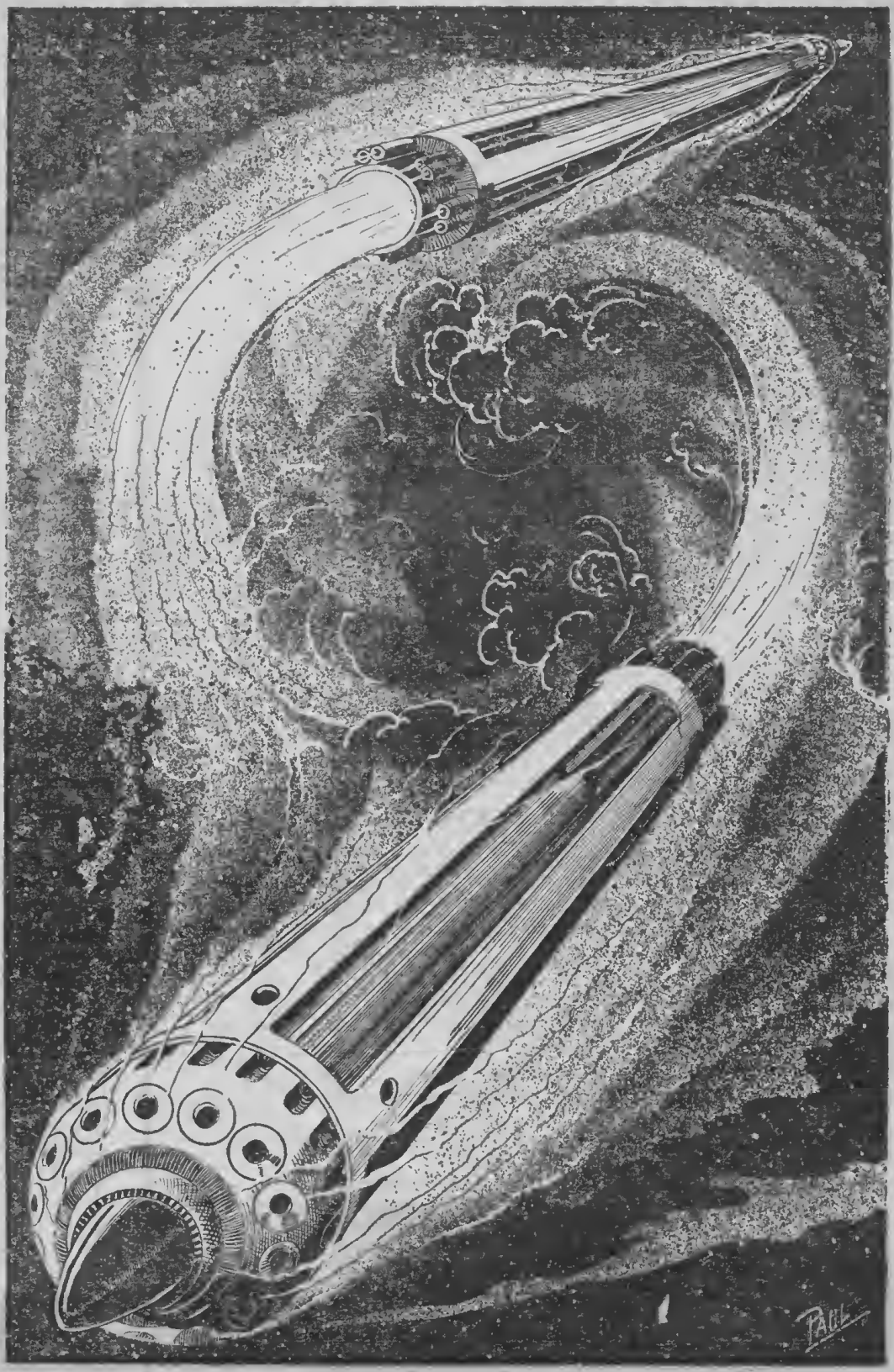
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THERE was a sharp smell of newly released ozone in the air. The crackling of the deuterium generator and the sinister hum of the coils in Preysing's power plant hushed up the three men who had just entered the squat building. Preysing, seated on a little metal stool near the cyclotron, held up a hand in warning.

One of the men was an army officer. He was in fact a high member of the United States General Staff. Another was the Assistant Secretary of State. The third was Belden of Palomar Observatory. They waited while Preysing slowly reached out a hand and inserted a bar of greyish metal into the great atomic wrecker. Then, with a slight hesitation, the very slightest of momentary halts, the iron-haired old physicist pressed a button.

There was a hiss added to the other noises of the place. Preysing's face paled slightly. The hiss grew in volume, becoming a roar. With an agility not to be expected of his age, the master experimenter leaped from his stool and made a dash for the door, grabbing up his notes with one hand.

"Get out! Quick! Out! At once!" he shouted and literally pushed the three through the door which he promptly swung shut and bolted. It was a door of very thick metal, the men suddenly noticed.

"Down, down!" the physicist cried and suited his words by falling on his stomach and hugging the ground. The others, the colonel, the administrator and the astronomer, followed suit.

Within the laboratory the roar was increasing in volume. The door shook and the building vibrated. Then suddenly there was a complete silence. An absolute cessation of sound that left the men's ears groping. Then, still silently, the top of the laboratory simply lifted itself off the building and ascended, with rapid acceleration, into the sky. A sharp wind howled about them a moment later.

When the men looked up again, they were lying next to a deep pit in the ground, a square pit exactly fitting the dimensions of the place where the finest physical laboratory in America had once stood. Of the building, there was no sign; of the foundations, there were no sign; there was only a square hole going down about a half mile into the solid rock, ending abruptly. Down the sides of this unbelievable hole, trickles of water from underground streams were already beginning to run.

Besides the wind, there had been no noise. There had been no fragments. There was nothing to be found of the laboratory. There was only a hole. And for an instant, Belden, who had looked up at the moment of the occurrence, had sworn that he had seen a glimpse of dead black sky just before the wind rushed in.

PREYSING sat at a small table in his home nearby and waited for his visitors to speak. Somewhat shaken, all three seemed as if, for a moment, they had forgotten their mission. Then finally the Assistant Secretary of State cleared his throat and started, a bit shakily.

"We had come to see you about something when that . . . that business . . . happened. I don't know now just how to begin."

"Never mind that," said Preysing, waving a hand. "It is important, terribly important, but maybe it can wait."

"I'm not so sure now," said the statesman. "What we wanted to see you about

by MILLARD VERNE GORDON

has to do with the tornado at Hill City, Kansas, three days ago."

Preysing narrowed his eyes and thought. He knew what the papers had said of the terrible damage. He spoke: "Well, what of this tornado. Aren't they common enough in that territory?"

"Yes," said the spokesman for the group, "yes, but it wasn't a tornado. It was something else. Something like what just happened. Hill City was not merely struck by wind, it was wiped out. Totally. There is just a huge hole in the ground a mile deep where the city used to be. And there was no sound, no explosion."

Preysing's face gradually turned white. He seemed confounded, at a loss for words. Then, "What?" he whispered. "What? You say that this has happened before? This evacuation of matter? How could it be? I thought no one else knew of this. No one else could have known. I was the most advanced in that field in the world. No one else could have found the secret of it!"

Belden leaned forward, his sharp blue eyes staring into Preysing's grey. "Exactly, no one on Earth. But some one or some thing outside of Earth has that knowledge. Preysing, my observatory reports strange things. Another crater has opened on the moon. And there was no explosion or scattering of rocks. And there is a green light hovering between the planets a million miles away!"

Preysing fell back, stunned. For a long period there was silence. Then he spoke.

"Gentlemen, what you have just witnessed was the farthest advance in atomic research. You have just watched the unidirectional displacement of matter. By proper treatment—by first ionizing an alloy of iridium and copper, then coating with uranium oxide and exposing for a period in beta particle bombardment, I produce a bar of metal which has been rendered neutronically unstable. This bar, when subjected to the cyclotron, bursts atomically. But it bursts in a special way, in a unidirectional way. It hurls itself and its components directly at the center of compulsion of the curvilinear universe. It extends a compulsory zone to all objects within certain boundaries of itself upwards and downwards. It does not expand energy sideways beyond those boundaries. In this instance the boundaries were the metal walls of my laboratory. It extended its force, undiminished, a half mile down through solid rock and who knows how far up? All the matter within that zone simply dropped at once simultaneously for the point at the universe's maximum neutrality. It left at an accelerating pace that will surpass the speed of light."

"How could it surpass the speed of light?" asked Belden. "I understand the speed of light to be the maximum possible."

"You do not understand. When it passes that speed, 186,000 miles per. second, it simply contracts into a negative quantitative existence and continues its acceleration. That such a negative existence can exist has been demonstrated mathematically, may I remind you, as long ago as 1937, by Hartman and Keilor of Princeton. The negative body continues acceleration until it again passes a limit where it becomes a positive body again and still accelerating, this time at twice the speed of light. This continues until the period of neutrality or the hub of the finite universe is reached, when it comes to a complete halt without losing its initial energy. Where this point of neutrality is, I do not know. But that it exists was demonstrated by the Brussels Observatory in 1934."

The colonel spoke for the first time. "What can we do to prevent further attacks on our nation and world? How can we keep ourselves from annihilation?"

Preysing turned to him. "We can build a space ship, powered by the unidirectional evacuation principle under control. We can weapon it with that. We can go through space and hurl the point of irritation back. We can follow it, if necessary, to the very hub of the universe and mop up."

The four men sat around and looked at each other. There was no other alternative.

A COLUMN of glistening metal, a half mile high and straight as a gun barrel, stood on a Pennsylvania field. For miles around the space was cleared and yet the towns nearby were crowded with thousands who had come to view the project. Not a word about it had ever appeared in the papers, yet the news had gotten around. Indeed, could not have failed to get around.

When the work of the nation's greatest steel mills is diverted entirely to one proj-

ect, and that one a rising giant column, it must attract some attention. Yet the papers had said nothing. The government did not say what sort of persuasion it had used to keep the matter from becoming a subject of national and world discussion, sufficient that they had thought it important to keep down the storm of anxiety that would have arisen had the threat to Terra been widely publicized. Gossip could get about but as long as it wasn't in print, not many would pay attention.

In the control room, at the front of this colossus, three men sat. The entire crew of the Atlas, the entire fighting force that was to engage the world's greatest enemy in combat, were but three. They were Preysing, Belden, and the military genius Moffat.

Now Preysing sat, tensely, one hand on the switch of the atomic evacuation drive, his eyes glued to the large dial that marked off the passing of seconds. Moffat sat with a forced leisure on his hard military features, while Belden watched the meters that marked the building up of the drive.

"Five seconds," snapped Preysing and almost immediately afterward his hand came down hard on the switch.

The roar that had been rising through the vast metal structure ended abruptly. Dead, enforced silence numbed the ears of the three.

Gradually they became aware of a building up of pressure. A sort of psychic tension pervaded their consciousness. They felt restrained to do nothing. About them they sensed a tightening of matter, a tightening indeed as if a sudden change in speed had brought about an immediate alteration in the nature of matter.

The numbers clicked away on the great dial. And as the hand reached twenty, Preysing jerked the switch open.

In twenty seconds, the Atlas had journeyed a million miles into space.

MOFFAT leaped from his seat and pulled open the metal covering of the bull's-eye port nearest him. Through it there glared the cold alien light of a myriad stars sprinkled amidst an impenetrable velvety blackness. The two others gathered around and stared with him.

"Marvelous," murmured Belden, "marvelous."

"So," said Preysing. "So. But we must not forget that we are on dangerous duty. That green light. Should it not be near us?"

The astronomer started. In the glory of open space he had forgotten for an instant the mission that had taken the Atlas out here. "Look about. Open the other ports."

It was Moffat who discovered it. It hung in space not too far from them. It was a steady glowing point of green light. Not a sphere, not a mass, just a green glow flaring out as mysteriously as any far-off star.

"I don't understand it," said Moffat after a while. "I thought surely that we should be able to see it as a sphere or a ship or something. It is as enigmatic as if we were still at Palomar."

"Curious," muttered the physicist. "I have an idea."

He depressed several buttons on the tremendous switchboard that guided and controlled the vast equipment of the craft. A meter light flared red and another dial registered. Several other indicators marked off and Preysing fell to appraising them. He ran off the resultants of several on the ship's integrator and when the little slip of paper rolled out, sat back and studied it in silence for several minutes.

He swivelled around in his seat, a frown on his face.

"It is no sphere or ship. It is just a point, a point of escape and counterbalance."

"What do you mean?" asked the others.

"I mean that this green spot marks a leakage of energy from some tremendous project going on at a point counterbalancing the position of the earth in the universe. In brief, that at the position diametrically opposite from that of the earth, in this universe, a vast expenditure of atomic evacuation energy is going on. Great quantities of matter are being evacuated to the universal hub. Some amount of energy is leaking along this axis and slipping past the point of stability to materialize from negativity here. The green glow is the escape point."

"Then what happened to Hill City was caused by the earth's coming into line with that beam? Coming to focus on a plane with the green escape point, the universal hub, and the point of origin across the other side of the cosmic diameter?"

"Correct. There is only one thing for us to do. We cannot shoot that point

out of existence. We cannot stop it or block it here. We must go to the point of origin and stop it there." The physicist spoke slowly and with deliberate emphasis.

"That means, doctor?" Moffat prompted.

"That means that we must plunge the Atlas into the green glow and go along on atomic evacuation drive along its plane. We must drive through the center of the curvilinear neutrality to the other edge of the universe. If we do not, this green point will continue and periodically other lines of devastation will impinge with the earth until our planet is riddled and pock-marked like the moon."

The men's faces tightened. Moffat made a slight gesture to Preysing. They resumed their places without a word, the physicist made some slight adjustments on the controls and pulled a switch.

The great column of gleaming steel that was the ship darted towards and into the green glowing point. Where it had been immediately afterward was only emptiness. The green point flared on, like an eye staring with Osirian hate into the stars. Of the Atlas, this space held it no longer.

AS THE great ship plunged into the green sector, the three men held their breaths instinctively. They had never really guided any craft like this before—they were the first ever to travel in space—the resources of a continent had gone into constructing this vessel and they were jeopardizing all now by this act. If it were possible to enter into another type of space through passing the point of the green glow, it might go all right.

That is what happened. Preysing did not have all the power on, they had a control over these things. The sudden drive of the start was mainly accidental, he had not admitted that to the others. So the ship seemed gently to slide into the green spot.

For an instant a ring of green seemed to pass through the ship, there was a sudden shifting and twisting about of everything as if they had taken an incredibly sharp turn at lightning speed and then everything went black.

Not really jet black, that was merely a momentary impression. Belden suddenly recognized what had happened after his eyes had readjusted and focussed again. Everything was in reverse coloring! Where before a thing had been light, now it was dark; where green, now red. The shift was incredible yet familiar. It was similar to the shift of lights that is revealed in a photographic negative. Imagine it as it would be in a full-color negative with colors of opposing shades replacing the normal ones.

"Where are we?" the soldier asked in confusion.

"In the negative space, faster than light." The physicist was watching the now white numbers on the black dials with fascination. "We are still accelerating. We seem to have been jumped to the speed of light as soon as we touched the green point and we are now rapidly catching up to the point where that speed will be doubled."

Looking out the ports, the three men saw a curiously reversed space. A dead non-glaring white space, dotted with points of vivid black, points that cast off black beams and cast dark fields wherever their rays reflected.

Now they noticed that these black stars were moving past them. The speed of the ship was becoming noticeable. And the stars were changing from points into short lines, then longer ones until space was streaked through and through.

"We are approaching the second change." the astronomer muttered.

Very shortly the black lines seemed to darken all of space, then suddenly there was a sharp snap and space was normally colored again. Black space, white stars and where a thing was red it stayed red and not green.

"Faster and faster," Preysing stated. "Watch."

This time the ship seemed to pass through the positive phased universe much more rapidly. The snap came again and all was reverse. And then still more rapidly, through that to positivity again.

"We accelerate constantly, we shall not stop until we reach the hub and pass through it. We must be covering incredible distances in mere seconds."

VERY shortly the shifts of the white to black and reverse had become so rapid that all seemed a formless flickering grey outside the ports. Inside all color had been lost and the figures of the men moved in a shadowy grey world. They sat and waited. It was uncomfortable but they could do nothing else. The dials and con-

trol readings had become incomprehensible because unreadable. Nothing was visible through the ports and the eyes could no longer do much more than differentiate between bulks.

Then, finally there came another snap, a sudden flare of color burst before their eyes, there was a violent shaking around in every atom of their being, the ship seemed to whirl like a mad dervish.

"The hub, the negative point! The center of all forces! We're passing through it!" shouted Preysing, trying to get to a port. But he could not for the ship was going through a split-second series of incredible twists.

Then as rapidly as it had come, they were past and all was grey again.

"We've passed through the center and are now on our way to the other end of the matter-evacuation beam. We are decelerating as fast as we accelerated. We are sliding down the other end of the universal diameter to the earth's exact counterbalance!" Preysing was elated.

"We must prepare to face whatever enemy awaits us at the other end," Moffat announced. "Remember our duty! We must eliminate the source of the beam there, be ready for action the second we come to a stop!"

The men realized the truth of this. Preysing at the control board watched the dials and kept his hands close to the regular space-drive controls. Speedy navigation might be necessary the second they cleared. Belden stood by the general vision plates prepared to map photographically and electrographically the exact nature of the physical bodies, suns, planets, satellites in their new region. Moffat stood by the controls of weapons, another board from which he could direct fire of several different sorts from any part of the tremendous craft.

Gradually the grey began to clear away. Now distinct intervals of black and white sky became observable and then for growing periods the negative universe and positive universe became clearly discernible.

They slowed continually and finally they were driving across a long period of negative space. Preysing, watching the timing, said: "This is the last period. We will come out of this to a dead stop in the other end of the beam across the universe."

The figures remained tense. The great craft drove ahead through the reversed space realm. Then, as had happened before, a ring of green flared through the craft, there was an odd twisting and shifting and the ship found itself in normal space, hanging at stop.

"I SEE no enemy," said Moffat tersely. He stared out the vision-plates, his fingers hovered over the controls of the powerful weapons at his disposal.

There was nothing near them. They were hanging in an empty black space, all about them shone the pinpoints of far distant stars. Nearby the sphere of a sun shone, its corona flickering fantastically.

"We are within the influence of that sun. If our enemy is here, he must have his base on a planet within that sun's system." Such was Belden's observation.

"How far are we from that sun?" asked the physicist.

Belden squinted. "It's hard to say. I cannot take measurements now. But it appears from here as old Sol would from the Earth."

"There's your planet," said Moffat gesturing to a port at the side.

They crowded over and looked. A small bluish-green planet hung there, a small ball but near enough to show itself as a globe.

"It has a moon," one remarked. They saw it, a smaller white body nearby.

"Do you know there is no green point any longer?" remarked the astronomer. "I do not think we shall ever find a direction-marker to return home on."

"There is also no enemy here and no space-craft," said the soldier. "I suggest that we proceed to that planet. In any case we must prevent the recurrence of death to our world."

The three men returned grimly to their places. With a brief glance around, Preysing touched several buttons. There was a slight jar.

The ship hovered now a few score thousand miles from the planet. The men stared out at it and were struck dumb. For the planet was the exact image of the Earth! It was the Earth!

"Impossible," muttered Preysing. "Utterly impossible. We have not gone around the universe to come back again. We have gone across it. This is impossible!"

"But there it is, doctor," Moffat answered. "There it is. It's the Earth all right. It can't be anywhere else. I see the Panama Canal cut."

"I suggest we land," Belden the astronomer had momentarily given up the worry about how they had gotten there. The

green spot in space was gone and presumably the menace had gone. If their ship's flight had done that alone, then it had achieved its purpose.

WITH a little maneuvering, Preysing found the spot from which they had taken off and brought the craft down. It landed easily despite its tremendous size. The men went down in the little elevator that ran through the length of the ship and let themselves out on the ground through the lock in the base.

A car sped out from the observation building at the edge of the field and came to a halt by them. Several men leaped out and grasped the hands of the three with enthusiasm.

"You've done it! The green point has vanished completely! But you certainly were quick about it!" enthused the Assistant Secretary of State who was among them, "We didn't expect you back for days and days."

Preysing shrugged his shoulders somewhat bewildered and allowed himself to be driven to the hotel where he had stayed during the days of the Atlas' construction. There he buried himself for three days while he worked over the figures and dial recordings of their trip and puzzled over the enigma of their return.

Then again Belden and Moffat found themselves with the physicist at his hotel room. Neither had gone to their homes since they were busy with arrangements regarding the craft and besides they were curious to know the answers Preysing sought.

Preysing looked at them queerly a bit when they were all together and rustled a batch of papers he held in his hands.

"Gentlemen," he began, "we are not on Earth at all. We are on another planet."

"Ridiculous!" exploded Moffat.

"Not at all, merely unexpected. This planet is an exact duplicate of Earth, atom for atom, but it is not Earth. It is a complete total double down to the last insect, blade of grass and man. It is Earth's counterbalance in the universe."

"Explain further," said Belden. "There is no reason why Earth must be exactly counterbalanced."

"Ah, but there is. We passed through the exact center of the universe, the exact focusing point of the total of energy and matter in existence. We continued out the opposite half of the universal sphere. A sphere, to be a sphere, must be balanced. Insofar as our universe is finite and therefore outside of it there is nothing, it would become a sphere, an exact sphere. Were it not finite, that would not hold. But as long as it is limited and finite, it must and did gravitate into the shape of perfect balance or equilibrium. Had it not done so, our very physical laws would be constantly shifting and our energy and matter in a state of flux far greater than the orderly shifts that we know take place. Matter may be changing into energy but energy is not changing into matter. And because of that we know that the universe, while it may be altering, is at least balanced.

"For it to be balanced, it must have equal gravitational stress on each side. One point on one side must be and is balanced exactly on the other. There are two halves to this existence and each is identical to the last atom and the last shifting erg to the other.

"We are on the Earth that is the counterbalance to the Earth we were born on. It is an exact duplicate of our own world and we ourselves have our place in it. And on our own world, there are three men meeting in a room doing exactly what we are doing now and saying what we are saying."

"Who are those men?" Moffat asked.

"THOSE men are the Belden, Moffat and Preysing who left this Earth to find out what caused the beam that wreaked havoc here. They left in a counter-Atlas and passed through us at the exact center of the universe. You remember the uncanny twisting and shifting there?"

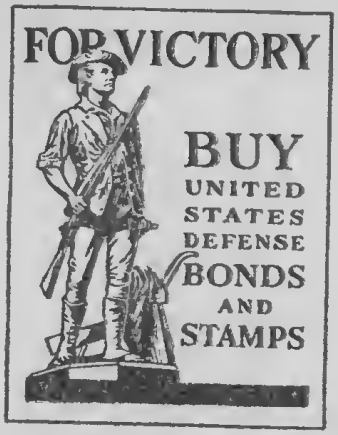
"Yes, but what of the green spot? What of the destruction to Hill City?" Belden felt that he had found something that was unanswered.

"The green spot was caused by the hole in space torn by the mass of material that comprised Hill City. That material met the material from my laboratory head on when it came out the beam at the other end—in both halves of the universe—and they fused. The resultant was a stasis along the universe's diameter that did not break until the passage of the two ships along it broke the stasis."

The physicist hesitated a minute and looked somewhat guilty. "As for Hill City,

Kansas. I confess that that was my accidental doing. I had an assistant conducting a checking experiment there. I had thought at first that his work had gone up in atomic explosion. That was the day before my own success in atomic evacuation."

The three men sat silently for a little while, trying to resolve the curious state of affairs in their heads. And a little while later, across the entire cosmos, in another world, three men stood up, shook hands in silence and left the hotel room to tell the world that Mother Earth was twins.



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"For Hafja Loris!" he cried.

THE REAL McCOY

It was a capital theory: When thousands of people read about Martians, believing in them, at least for the moment, why couldn't that thought-energy be materialized? Johnson knew it could—and sent his friend to Mars to watch the results. Only they'd both overlooked one detail . . .

Illustration by Damon Knight

"LET go of it, I say, let go of it! Leggo! There! I told you what you'd get."

Professor Caleb Johnson released the right hand of his bawling eight-year-old offspring, spluttered indignantly and tossed the publication he had wrested from the child to his friend, John Coombes, seated a few feet away in a somewhat seedy, upholstered chair.

"Mary!" he called over his shoulder, breathing heavily, "come in and take your uncooperative son away."

Reseating himself in an almost precise duplicate of Coombes' chair, he folded his arms and regarded his son, who was cowering several feet away, with undisguised disgust. As his wife, Mary, entered the room, attired in her usual print smock, he looked up.

"Take him away and put him to bed. No! No! I won't argue. I'm master in my own house and no kid of mine is going to get gay when his father wants something!"

Mrs. Johnson bridled, but she said nothing, although the Irish in her was begging to come out. Used to her husband's abrupt ways, she simply sighed, took her sobbing son by the hand and led him to bed.

Coombes laughed.

"Who would have thought a kid would fight over a thing like this?" he held up the copy of the popular monthly comic strip magazine over which the professor and his son had been violently disputing and shook it.

"But that proves what I say!" cried Johnson, relighting his pipe. "It's a national preoccupation amounting almost to a mania. Eighty of these damn things or thereabouts come out once every month. Four or five million kids—the figure may be twice that size—read them eagerly, hungrily. God, John, I ought to know. Billy buys six of them religiously—and that one in particular. The Masked Spaceman! What a trend! A gigantic, wholesale popular escape to the stars. Why worry if England is being bombed when the Martians may be getting ready to invade the dear old planet? Who cares who conquers the world as long as Snervo the Sneering, Emperor of Snerd, provides the necessary suspense to blanket the mind completely? Does it matter a rap in hell if fifty millions starve when Chuck Brisbane is killing off the rapacious Mongols in the twenty-fifth century? I'm not particularly attacking the stuff, remember. In a way it's a sort of mental soothing syrup applied on a national scale, probably keeping lots of people out of insane asylums who should, by all rights, have broken down long ago. But the whole thing does prove my point—granting that my original theory is correct. If thought impulses are electrical, they have mass, body. With sensitive enough apparatus they could be detected. Coombes, my boy, the possibilities are tremendous when viewed from the standpoint of scientific research."

Coombes settled himself more comfortably in his chair and pulled on his waxed moustache.

"It's world-shaking, Caleb. It's a tremendous responsibility. Well," he cocked an eye and looked toward the ceiling, "sup-

by HUGH RAYMOND

(Author of "The Year of Uniting," "Path of Empire," etc.)

pose it works. You're tuning in on uncounted billions of separate experience, trillions of thoughts, quintillions of tiny fragments of reverie. You're liable to materialize—God knows what!"

"Maybe a planet—or a giant Big Bertha smoking and loaded, pointing straight at the earth?" Johnson laughed, somewhat deprecatingly, "No, it won't come out that way. My method is selectivity." He mused awhile. "First, detection, then control, build-up and correlation, then projection, real and solid. It's as simple as all that. Catch your waves like balls thrown into a baseball mitt and throw 'em further, only harder."

"Precisely what are you getting at?"

"I'M LEADING up to it." Johnson got up and poured two glasses of a white wine from a handy decanter. He gave one to Coombes. "And I warn you it has a kick," he continued. "I prefer to keep this thing down to people, characters, for the present. Nobody, nothing gets thought about as much as people. Oh, I know what you're thinking. We might materialize him," Johnson closed his eyes and formed the mental image of the Dictator, "but don't worry. Remember, I've got selectivity. Anyway, frankly, I'm not interested in the mundane. Science is my forte and yours too. Scientific fiction is our hobby. We'll concentrate on that. Wells' Martians and McColloughs' Martians and Venusians and—and this sort of thing," he indicated the brilliantly colored cover of the comic magazine. "These characters, from the viewpoint of radiation as brain impulses, do exist. Certainly! The ether must be full of them, crowding in on one another until there's little room left for the more ordinary stuff. I've got a machine that detects 'em, also a sort of relay and a receiver.

Coombes reflected pensively.

"You're leading up to something. Okay, what is it? I have the feeling that your little detector is a mere deuce in a straight flush. Let's see your hand."

Johnson laughed pleasantly.

"Right! I won't beat about the bush. As a matter of fact, this is all background. I'm indulging in a little cookery without the cookbook. I can break down solids, broadcast 'em and receive 'em, intact. I don't know why. I haven't got the blueprints of the law that governs what I think I'm doing, especially this vague and unparliamentary sort. What I'm dithering with is the idea of interplanetary exploration. Say Mars. It's a fairly close planet, moreover I'm as curious as the man in the street to know exactly what goes on there. Telescopes don't show me anything. In short, to be less stuffy about the whole thing, I want you to go. What goes with you is mere background, stage stuff."

Coombes was not in the least perturbed. He didn't object; he knew Johnson. If the professor thought he could broadcast him to some other spinning ball in the system, it was okay with him.

"AT THE same time," continued Johnson, calmly, puffing slowly on his pipe, "we can test my theory. The scenery you'll get after you land won't be Martian, maybe, but it'll be real. If I'm right, we've solved a million human problems at one fell swoop. We can take sand and make food out of it. We can tune in on the universe and build tin cans from the talk of a thousand worlds. The emanations of Arcturus will clothe us in golden raiment and we can travel from New York to San Francisco—or Alpha Centauri on the stuff of rainbows. We can . . ."

Coombes sat back and drank it all in. It was rather big, but then Johnson was a big man. There was nothing penny-ante about him. Finally he sat up.

"But why Mars?" he asked, somewhat irrelevantly, at last.

"Why not Mars?" Johnson stared at him in surprise, "Can you think of a better place? Would you prefer, maybe, a bath of carbon-dioxide on Venus? I'm surprised at you, Johnny. You've never been choosey before. After all, when I sent you down in that radio controlled submarine, you had no objections to the Maracot Deep. And I gave you your choice of that or the Gowanus canal!"

THERE were some months of preparation. Johnson, very secretly, built a small but powerful rocket, fitted it up with the necessary apparatus and the all-important receiving machine and fired it off somewhere in the hidden fastnesses of the Hudson Highlands.

Three months later, he observed the landing. A gigantic blue flash spread out over a whole quarter of Mars as he watched it through his low-power telescope and

momentarily blinded him. Cursing himself for having forgotten to disconnect the electronic amplifying device before looking, he went to bed, further dismayed by the possibility that some astronomy ham had seen the flash.

But no one saw it and after waiting a few days and sweating some pints of blood, Johnson decided that everything was ready. He took Coombes down to his cellar and showed him the stuff.

"Do you think it's airtight?" Coombes asked anxiously, casting a skeptical glance at the tall robot-like metal suit which Johnson had built to protect him from the expected Martian conditions. He concentrated all his attention on the suit, disregarding the immense pile of glittering apparatus, the three main sections of which Johnson referred to somewhat whimsically as the "pitcher", the "baseball bat" and the "home run" in that order. "Why in the name of my unholy destination did you make it yourself?" he continued, peevishly. "Couldn't the Brooklyn Iron and Kettle Works handle this too, like the rocket?"

Johnson ignored the sally.

"I like to keep my hand in now and then. I admit that the legs don't articulate too well," he said, grudgingly, "but the joint gaskets are absolutely perfect," he continued, rubbing his hands together gleefully, and tapped the gleaming flanges of the joints.

"It's going to be stuffy in there."

"You'll be gone only two hours—for the first trip, allowing time for the transit of your component atoms from here to there. I'll install air cooling later."

"What do you want observed?"

"We'll do this right. I want pictures and lots of them, in color. That flask on the belt you'll open at the proper time and collect a sample of the atmosphere. You might also try a whiff of the air if there is any, but don't catch cold doing it." He paused and indicated a small stud on the breastplate of the suit, "This turns on the oxygen mixture. You have enough for twelve hours, but don't move around too much. No use wasting oxygen. You might need it. Something might go wrong."

"Oh, shut up!" Coombes grumbled and got into the suit.

JOHNSON left the metal-clad figure and went to his instruments. The sending unit was simply a heavy metal box which effectively concealed whatever apparatus made it do its stuff. He switched on the current and immediately the house lights dimmed as the machine shook slightly, groaned and began eating up tremendous quantities of power. He watched the dials on his switchboard for awhile intently, then, apparently satisfied, turned to his friend. He took the metal suit by the arm and guided it to the open door of the steel box.

"Here's where you come in," he said and pushed the suit, Coombes and all, into the darkness of the interior, "Now, wait," he continued, glancing back at his dials. "Okay, you start in three minutes," he took the figure by the hand. "Remember, the instant you get there, start the oxygen tanks functioning. Never mind!" he exclaimed, anticipating an objection. "You won't need any on the way. Did you ever see a radio wave that needed breathing to go on waving?" He reached up, shut the face plate but reopened it again. "Oh, I almost forgot. Your equipment is on Mars. Goodbye."

The heavy steel door closed. Johnson eyed his wristwatch anxiously for about two minutes. He was considering reopening the door when suddenly the lights went out altogether as whatever operated the millwheels started pushing and then went on again suddenly. Johnson dashed to the cellar window opening on the southern sky. He gazed upward through the thick mist of dust covering it at the red dot of Mars. He didn't bother opening the steel box because he knew a traveller was on his way.

"Great guns!" he whispered explosively. "I'll bet he does it!"

SEVEN minutes and about eighty million miles later, Coombes opened his eyes and immediately remembered to turn on the oxygen. The sensation of returning consciousness was curiously devoid of spectacular effects. He felt no nausea or sudden weightlessness. A sudden belch reminded him of a complete return to normalcy. And he began to look around.

The rocket had been constructed twenty feet long by about six in diameter and provided with glass portholes in each of the two chambers into which it had been divided. From the outside it looked like the usual cigar-shaped metal cylinder dotted with rows of windows. The interior compartments were arranged at right angles to the walls.

Coombes found walking a little difficult because, although the floor originally

was at a right angle with the wall, the rocket was lying on its side, somewhat slanted as a matter of fact and what had been the floor was now a wall.

A soft light came through a row of windows at the side. Coombes made his way to one of them and looked out.

The scene was dishearteningly ordinary. What after all, he asked himself, could he have expected? Certainly the planet wasn't made of green cheese. Planets are planets wherever you go and some of the rules apply everywhere. He got up from his squatting position, closed the door of the Martian brother to the steel box at home and returned to the port.

Beyond him stretched a plain, somewhat grey and sandy. There was a small dim sun hanging low on the horizon. Its color was vaguely oyster white. Some hundred feet beyond the rocket several outcroppings of a red rock broke the monotonous expanse. Far beyond, to the right of the sun stretched an immense, rolling plain of faintly reddish sand. It glowed weakly in the faint light of Sol. To the left of the red plain the grey expanse commenced and continued on into a misty nothingness.

The level of the sand was almost up to the port through which the metal-clad figure peered. Above the window a solid stretch of metal indicated the door which would admit him to the surface of Mars.

Coombes reached up and unlocked it.

Instantly, as the pressure on the rubber gaskets was removed, the hiss of air betrayed to Coombes the absolute confirmation of the fact long ago put into theory by scientists, that the atmosphere of Mars was pretty thin.

He felt protectively snug in the metal suit. Presently he got up, hooked one hand over the edge of the door, drew himself easily over the "sill" and eased his metal-clad body to the surface of the planet.

The feel of the sandy surface startled him. It was hard and firm, well packed and failed to give at his most vigorous step. He had anticipated the lessened gravity, of course, so he wasn't too surprised when he floated away momentarily at the end of a too-energetic kick at the sand. Up he went and away.

He watched the rocket below for awhile and then began to descend. Carefully he made his way back. Several minutes later, using some simple engineering horse sense, he had righted the rocket and steadied its bulk by piling sand around the firing base to a height of several feet.

Then he jumped inside, unlimbered his apparatus and got to work.

HE spent several minutes photographing the badly lighted scene. After awhile he noted, from constant observation that what he had suspected at first was not true. The sun was rising, not setting and the light was getting stronger.

When Coombes had finished with the pic tures, he filled a locker in the inside wall of the rocket with sand dug somewhat laboriously despite the slight gravity. He carefully packed away some dried remnants of plant stalks and leaves.

Then he switched on the radio. Due to the distance between the two planets he had to wait some minutes before his voice got to Earth and again several more minutes before Johnson's voice got back. As it turned out, the first time there was no delay at all. The professor's voice came over the transmitter hollow, thin and very reedy, but angry as blazes.

"Where the hell are you? Answer me, you dried out wart! Don't tell me you've had an accident. Well, answer! I'm repeating this message. Where the hell are you. . . ."

Coombes leaned wearily against the wall, glanced once at the door of the projectile to see whether it was safely closed or not, then undid the straps of his face plate. It fell away and hit his chest with a dull thud. Then he snapped over the power stud of the broadcasting unit and leaned toward the microphone.

"Hello! Hello! This is Coombes. Keep your shirt on Professor. I got here, alright. I've even been collecting some of the damn planet and packing it away. Standing by for immediate reply. Keep cool."

The reply came tumbling happily back over the ether. Strident as it was, it sounded pleased.

"Good, my boy, good! I was afraid for awhile that the rocket had cracked open or something. Oh, don't worry, nothing would have happened. You wouldn't have suffocated or been crushed. If the receiving apparatus failed to function you would have never felt any pain. No pain at all my boy. You would have been broadcast . . . forever. Well, now, what does the surface look like. Let's have details. I take it you've photographed everything in sight. . . ."

Halfway, Coombes cut him short. He switched off the receiving end and shouted into the transmitter.

"Yes, yes, everything's been done exactly as you wanted. Though I don't know why we came here at all. You want to know what the surface looks like? I refer you to Woolerton's "Martian Observations" page 238, middle of the page. There is an excellent dry-point sketch of Woolerton's ideas of what the topography of a typical Martian scene is like. Look at it. Soak it up. You'll be seeing as much as I can now."

"What about the atmosphere?" Now that things were successfully under way, Johnson's voice settled down to a loud whisper.

COOMBES laughed grimly.

"There is about enough air on Mars to give a microbe dying of TB a short breath. There is probably about as much oxygen as could be contained on the point of a pin. The planet is practically dead. And there's nothing I can do . . ."

"Shut up, dammit! Everytime you start wise-cracking I'll cut you off. Eh, I'll wager you're doing the same to me. All right. Now listen. I'd have installed a television set on that rocket if it would have worked, but it wouldn't, so you'll have to be my eyes. I rather suspected things were going to be the way you found 'em. All right. Now, what about the canals?"

Briefly Coombes described the stretches of red sand far off on the horizon.

"Interesting. Very interesting. You'll find a tripod telescope in locker three. Set it up, point it to the horizon and tell me what happens?"

Coombes did as he was told. He clapped an eye to the lens and looked out over the dry, deserted Marsland. As he had expected, he saw precisely nothing more than a further expanse of red sand.

"Let it go, let it go," said Johnson dejectedly. "I guess we might as well try out my theory. You say there is no evidence of any previous materialization whatever? Hum. Well, so much for the power of thought unaided by a couple of amplifying tubes. Oh, well. Johnny, are you ready? I'm going to switch on the power in three minutes. If I'm right there is a constant stream of technically tangible thought impulses surrounding the planet due to its constant association in the minds of our peoples. When I turn on the power —still if I'm right whatever phantoms haunting your dead globe will come to life. Anything is liable to happen. The rocket is likely to be buried instantly beneath a thousand ton Martian palace. You might be at the exact intersection of two opposing disintegration rays; a giant Martian monster might eat you. Are you game?"

Coombes laughed heartily.

"Johnson, when I get back I'm going to break your neck. In the meantime, I have only one life to give for science. Remember, you're taking risks too. If I get buried in some phoney Martian basement, you'll never get your rocket back, or me either. Go ahead."

AS the second hand of his watch passed the limit of the time required for the power impulses to reach Mars, Coombes looked up suddenly. Outside, everything had suddenly gone black. The soft grey light had been instantly replaced by solid darkness. He crept up to one of the window-portes and looked out. What he saw almost knocked him cold.

Two giant moons rode the Martian skies. He needed no telescope to recognize what they were. Phobos and Deimos. "The twin moons, hurling over dying Mars" he thought, quoting the famous lines from McColloughs' Martian series.

The horizon was visible in the moonlight, a pale, wavering line of soft silver. Beyond, at its limits the tall spires of a Martian? No, thought Coombes, Hankoomiam city. He recognized the architecture with ease, having read McColloughs' series to death. The lines of the fairy city fascinated him. Forgetting Johnson, forgetting the waiting radio, forgetting the open face-plate of his pressure suit, he walked to the exit-porte, opened it and stepped out.

A cool, perfumed breeze, a zephyr possible only in a thick atmosphere, hit him full in the face. He breathed deeply once or twice before he knew what he was doing, then suddenly blanched and put one hand to his throat. But it was an unnecessary gesture. He was breathing air, pure air, good air, Hankoomian air, which, as he suddenly remembered was manufactured at a great central atmosphere plant.

He dropped to the ground—and was instantly immersed in the fronds of some gigantic, perfumed plant. The leaves and tendrils encircled his face and almost

strangled him with their scent. But he managed to get to his feet again. And just in time.

An intense white beam of light suddenly smote him in the face and blinded his eyes. When he opened them again, he was standing with his back to the wall of the rocket, listening to the sonorous tones of a giant white man clad in scanty leathern trappings trimmed with strange metal clasps and armed with a long thin sword and a strange pistol of heavy and intricate design. The aforementioned sword was busily poking Coombes back to where he was helplessly spread against the steel walls of the rocket.

"Ho, stranger? Who dares to interrupt the nightly walk of Miles Garter, prince of Uranium? Kaboola! Come, sniff the night-prowler. Is he friend or foe?"

The hair on the back of Coombes' neck stood up straight and stiff as the horror addressed came into view. He had been aware of some vast black bulk hovering in the background and had further noted one end of a thin chain in the free hand of the white giant. Now he knew what the chain was for. Kaboola was Miles Garter's faithful watchdog.

The blunt poking nose drew nearer. Six rows of menacing teeth opened and closed with a nasty clashing noise.

"Ho, Kaboola. Stay. He looks harmless. Of what country are you stranger? What is your metal? By the hair of my ancestors I have never seen the like such as you wear."

CONSIDERING the fact that Miles Garter had originally come from Earth and that styles had changed little in the space of the fifty years or so he had been on Hankoom, Coombes felt that the question was a little silly. He was about to open his mouth, when there was a crackle in the newly grown bushes surrounding the rocket. The giant white figure turned its attention immediately to this spot. Simultaneously there was a roar in the air and a small rocket-like space-ship swooped by, looped around once or twice and landed with a heavy thud in the thick underbrush some hundreds of feet away. As soon as the rocket landed, the light of the hurtling moons disclosed the emergence of three human figures who broke into a trot, rapidly approaching Coombes and Miles Garter.

As soon as they had approached to within several yards, strange hand guns drawn, Coombes uttered a cry of utter despair.

"Chuck Brisbane!"

The foremost of the figures strode up to him, ignoring the imposing figure of Garter, who stood, quietly fuming, on the alert.

"Who knows me?" asked the figure. "Who knows the name of Chuck Brisbane of the twenty-fifth century?"

"Cut the loud palaver, Chuck," remarked a cynical female voice and the second of the trotting figures moved up. "You're not the only big-shot in the twenty-fifth century, you know. But never mind. Who are these people. Hey, Dr. Boo! Come on over here."

An old man hobbled up. He had gray hair and was holding on tightly to a shining contraption of what looked like tin and beer-bottle glass. This he waved.

"Shall I give them a shot of the paralysis ray?" he asked frostily.

"Hmmmm, don't know yet," replied Brisbane who stepped up to the giant white and stuck his nose under the former's under lip."

"Who are you?" he damanded in a businesslike voice and trod out a coppery colored gun with the words "Chuck Brisbane Disintegrating Pistol" engraved in one side of the barrel. "What are you birds doing in the territory of King Tak of Mars? Don't you know it's against the law to trespass on the Royal hunting grounds?" The business end of the pistol wavered back and forth between Coombes and Miles Garter.

The girl stood arms akimbo.

"Maybe they're allies of the Tiger people."

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," barked Brisbane.

At last Miles Garter came to life.

"What insults are these?" he roared and brandished his sword. Brisbane stepped back a pace or two, somewhat startled. "Who is King Tak?" he roared again and drew himself to his full height, snapping two metal clasps in the act. "Know you not that the land you walk upon is the Royal Hunting preserve of Miles Garter, Warlord of Hankoom?"

"Fancy that," remarked the girl and drew her own side arms, "and I suppose you are Miles Garter?"

The white man stared at her stonily.

"Even so," he replied with tremendous dignity. "From my red tower of Uranium,

I, my beauteous consort Hafja Loris and her grandfather, Moris Boris, Beddak of Uranium and its twin city Hydrogen, keep the peace of Hankoom. Beware, those, who dare disturb it. For Hafja Loris!" he boomed and held his sword point to the deep blue of the night sky.

"THIS is all very impressive, gentlemen," broke in Coombes, who was getting somewhat uncomfortable standing stiff against the rocket, "but I am sure that I can explain . . ."

"Yeah, and who are you?" cried the girl.

"Careful, Helma," cautioned Brisbane. "he might be dangerous. You, who are you?"

Coombes squirmed uncomfortably. He regarded the situation as rediculous in the extreme. These people, after all, existed merely because The Brooklyn Light and Power was operating at full blast. He felt more than ludicrous speaking to what strictly speaking were just tangible ghosts. Miles Garter saved him any embarrassment.

"Hold!" he roared, "Enough of this useless talk. Kaboola!" he called, beckoning to his faithful hound, "Come," he turned and made as if to walk away.

Brisbane was visibly perturbed at this. He pointed his pistol at the ground slightly behind Garter's retreating footsteps and pressed the trigger. Instantly the spot volatilized and hurled the Warlord forward on his face. The giant figure managed to regain its feet, red with rage.

"And were you armed with swords, you should taste the mettle of my steel!" he shrieked, the corded muscles standing out everywhere, tense. "But as you are bare of metal, you shall fight with your side arms. I give you three tals. . . ."

A shriek from the old man interrupted the brewing fracas. They all looked back.

"Airfleets!" he yelled and scurried off into the bushes.

Approaching swiftly from the east and from the west, two great streams of ships hurtled toward each other with terrific speed.

Coombes had only to give one glance to know what was going on. From the construction of the oncoming western ships he knew that they belonged to the mighty Emperor Snervo the Sneering of the Planet Snerd. The style of the opposition betrayed the presence of the great Crash Moron.

There were several seconds of silence from all concerned, then, Miles Garter hurled himself headlong under his faithful hound Kaboola and drew his radium pistol, Chuck Brisbane and Helma disappeared in the direction of Dr. Boo who was breathing noisily somewhere off in the thick plant growths and Coombes betook himself suddenly to the door of the rocket which he kicked open energetically.

Firing broke out abruptly. Great streams of rays shot from the prows of the leading ships of both fleets and wreaked immediate havoc. Watching from the shelter of the rocket, Coombes mentally reviewed the probable armaments of the opposing armadas. Snervo's men generally specialized in rays and ray guns, while Crash Moron and his cronies, including the well-known Doctor Darkov held the explosive bullet and similar firearms close to their hearts, reserving rays for the first offense which never lasted long anyway.

BLAZING ships tumbled from the skies. Lit by the lurid glow of the two hurtling moons which were near the point when they would hurtle completely out of sight, the scene was outlined in ghastly relief. Continuous eruptions of brilliant light sprang from the batteries of the heavy battle cruisers and reduced opponents to dust and flaming wreckage. The Martian night was filled with thunder and lightning.

Looking well off to the north-west, Coombes made out the sudden approach of another air-fleet. The Uranium fleet! Blackening the deep hue of the night sky, a dark hole moving slowly across the expanse of brilliant stars, the bird-like vessels of Uranium bore down on the mortal combat.

From somewhere outside the rocket, Coombes heard the air split by a sudden shout: "For Hafja Loris!" Simultaneously the mighty frame of Miles Garter sprang aboard his hastily improvised steed, Kaboola, and dashed away toward the direction of the rapidly approaching fleet of his own city. After a time, signals shot skyward in his appoximate location and several minutes later a gigantic warship descended and took him aboard. It was apparent from the moment he regained command of his fleet, as Coombes could make out, that they were headed for victory. Utterly fearless, regardless of the

greater number of vessels opposing them, they sped on.

By common agreement, Moron's and Snervo's fleet suddenly forsook battle and turned like wounded lions on the powerful air-armada almost upon them. In addition to explosive bullets and destructive rays, the terrible atomic bombs and electrical vortexes were brought into play. Slowly the color of the night turned to ashen grey and then to the brilliance of neon. In a terrible burst of speed, the foremost vessels of the Uranium fleet reached the outskirts of the united defenses and joined battle.

Coombes refused to insult his eyes any longer. He went and turned on the radio and had a short chat with Johnson, who became jubilant.

"What did I tell you?" he exulted, and over the vast spaces, Coombes could hear his feet tapping a dance on the floor of his cellar. "I was right. Do you think they're harmless?"

"Oh, quite," replied the other sarcastically and waved an arm aloft. "In the past five seconds at least sixty ships went up in flames, were resolved into their component atoms, rotated into the fourth dimension or what have you. All that's necessary now is for Wells' Martians to show up. Hello! Johnson! Caleb! By gosh, they did!"

COOMBES dropped the microphone and ran to the nearest porte. He stared wide-eyed through the window, as from the darkest portion of the horizon, out of the inky blackness of the Marsland, a terrifying army of mechanized monsters swept forward, thin red blades of fire playing on the ground before them.

Suddenly a flash of light to the left made him turn his glance there. He gasped. Taking off in a burst of speed, the outlandish spaceflyer of Chuck Brisbane had collided with a giant Uranium vessel and hurtled both of them to the ground. Men and machines tumbled chaotically in a dozen directions. Shouts and screams rose to the breeze, drowning out the sullen thunder of the battle airfleets far above. Shots rang out. Several hand rays burst into activity, accompanied by screeching noises of overstrained machinery and human bodies bursting into flame. But in a moment it was all over. The mighty frame of Miles Garter (for it had been his ship that had collided with Brisbane's) rose toweringly on the prow of his wrecked vessel. He turned toward the advancing mechanized monsters, drew his sword and waved it aloft.

"For Hafja Loris!" he bellowed, "I still live!"

A boiling ray reached out from one of the three-legged horrors and struck him full in the chest. He dissolved rapidly into an oily smoke.

RESISTANCE, or what was left of it, collapsed. With dolorous shouts, Helma, Dr. Boo, Chuck Brisbane and the remnants of the crew of the giant Uranium battleship took to their heels and fled, leaving the Wellsian offspring, Coombes and his rocket in full possession of the field.

"Combes! Coombes! Blast it, where are you?"

The shrieking voice called the man squatting at the window-porte back to the receiver. He lifted the microphone a little tremulously.

"Yes, professor. The battle is practically over. It's getting very dark again, except for the red heat rays. You say you're shutting off the power? When? Good. I'll speak to you again, then."

Outside, the Marsland was almost quiet. The battling fleets had vanished and the fairy city on the horizon was a smoking ruin. Only the mechanized army remained and it rushed blindly across the great plain spreading utter destruction where it passed.

Coombes, watching wearily, saw them suddenly stagger in their forward stride. And abruptly, he realized that it was getting light.

But the end was not yet in sight. Even as the atmosphere began to thin and the wan light brighten, a new diversion presented itself. From everywhere about the rocket and as far into the distance as he could see, great thick tentacles grew swiftly from the sandy soil. Chaotically, the giant metal monsters stumbled into their midst, collapsing and dying. As if enraged, the leathery lengths, twisting and writhing in hideous life, seized upon the fading forms and crushed them mercilessly. A sort of thin, high whine, as if of universal pain, rose from the expiring horrors. One by one they fell, toppled by the living forest. One by one the red rays of heat and destruction winked out.

The light suddenly grew stronger. Far back on Earth, Professor Johnson had shut off the power and Mars was again returning to its natural state. Looking up, Coombes discerned the twin moons as they hovered on the edge of the far horizon, preparing to set. They faded dismally into nothingness. Again, outside, reigned an air-less void.

Coombes shut his eyes on the scene of carnage. Idly he wondered from what literary work of some terrestrial author had sprung the images of the great tentacles. He opened them after a minute or two and peered out.

He leaped to his feet with a shrill scream and pressed his nose against the glass of the window-porte. His eyes were as wide open as they could go and then some, for over the familiar, dry, dead surface of Mars, wavered and writhed the ghastly columns of clutching flesh. Under the growing rays of the rising sun they seemed to suddenly become more active. Already, Coombes could see, the ones nearest the rocket were bending over curiously with hideous spasmodic motions, reaching out their powerful tops toward him. He could only guess at the enormous tearing power of that awful life.

"Professor!" The scream jumped the intervening eighty million miles like a shot and nearly deafened the waiting Johnson.

"Well, man, what is it? You sound as though the planet had blown up."

"This is no time for joking. It's the Martians!"

"What? Who? Who did you say it was?"

Coombes threw one last agonized glance before throwing in the master switch of the apparatus that would broadcast him back to Earth. He saw the conical end of the rocket squeezed off in the grip of one of the tentacles as neatly as a finger might crush tallow.

"The real McCoy!" he screamed, above the hiss of escaping air, and dove head first into the black but comforting confines of the broadcasting chamber.

ARKHAM HOUSE PRESENTS

Someone in the Dark, by August W. Derleth, Arkham House, 1941, 335 pages, $2.50.

The first in a projected series of fantasy books, the present volume is a collection of what the author considers his sixteen best weirds, written over the course of two and a half decades. If you are fond of tales of the weird and supernatural, you cannot afford to miss this volume. Neatly printed, tastefully bound, and bearing a fine symbolic jacket by Frank Utpatel, who's illustrated for *Weird Tales* in the past, and whose fine drawings for the Crawford edition of Lovecraft's "Shadow Over Innsmouth" brought the highest of praise, the book will make a handsome addition to your fantasy collection. The size is 7" by 4¾"; it can easily be slipped into your coat-pocket for odd-minute perusal.

The book is divided into three sections, each containing tales classifiable in a definite school of weird-story writing. As Derleth explains in his introduction, the tales in the first section (entitled: "Not Long for This World") show most strongly the influence of the late M. R. James. The tenor is that of the British weird tale, the style genteel, but the powerful treatment is definitely American, willy nilly. We enjoyed "Glory Hand," "Bramwell's Guardian," and "McGovern's Obsession" most of all. Because of the restrictions he has set upon himself in these stories, it is best not to read more than three at one sitting.

In the second section (entitled: "A House With Somebody in It') the Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman influence predominates. Here again, the individual stories should not be read in rapid succession lest the more agile-minded readers unconsciously commence doing detective work upon the author's pattern and spot what lies ahead too easily. More than in any other type of imaginative fiction, the traditional ghost story requires a sort of mental cooperation on the part of the reader that full appreciation may result. To achieve the correct degree of horror, the spookerie must be rather obvious, this element offset by careful presentation of atmosphere, the much abused "local color," and sound characterization. Derleth succeeds admirably in all of these, succeeds in leaving the reader with a queazy feeling despite the necessary affronts to the intelligence of those who reject the concepts of supernaturalism. The phenomenon is what H. G. Wells terms: a suspension of disbelief. We could not decide which of the yarns in this second section we enjoyed most; all were top-notch.

In the third section (entitled: "Visitors from Down Under") Derleth dips into that genre of weird narrative most acceptable to the science-fiction addict: the super-physical, essentially material and logically developed mythology perfected by the late H. P. Lovecraft. This mythology uses as its base the myriad evidences available of pre-human cultures existent upon Earth and postulates pre-human rulers of old Terra who may not necessarily be extinct today, coupled with further postulation of super-human intelligence in various other sectors of our own universe. These beings and races are in a struggle for cosmic supremacy and *homo sap* is little more than an onlooker, although various individuals of all of these cultures have found use for humans in the past for pawns. "The Return of Hastur" and "The Sandwin Compact" both give hints of this cosmic horror—for horror it is to consider such super-human beings battering their way about, little more concerned with Earth and man than we are concerned with ant-hills. Needless to say, we found this part of the book the most enjoyable.

But it's all first rate, and we unhesitatingly recommend the entire volume "Someone in the Dark." Watch this department for news on further titles in the Arkham House editions.

an odd little tale is

A MESSAGE FOR JEAN

by WILFRED OWEN MORLEY

THE thing about a story like this is deciding just where it should begin. Personally, I think it started on that afternoon when Jean and I collided head-on in a newsstore in Stamford; she was hellbent to pick up the latest adventures of Jules de Grandin, while I was equally anxious to find out if, perhaps, Marc C. DuQuesne was going to get a break for once. At that point we discovered that the old law of physics applies equally to lovers of the weird and the pseudo-scientific types of imaginative fiction.

Now, of course, Marc C. DuQuesne, and his follower, Kimball Kinnisson, rub noses with Jocelyn Earle, Ajax Calkins, and Grandfather Packer on our big shelf in the drawing room, and little Cindy is getting rather proficient in distinguishing Bok illustrations; but the whole point of this is merely to give you the idea that I'm not the type of person to be floored when something untoward actually happens.

So when Danny Burke walked in one afternoon with the assertion that he'd been time-traveling, I simply nodded.

"Try some of the cognac and begin at the beginning."

That seemed to deflate Dan a bit; I could see he was disappointed that I didn't either collapse for reach for the phone with a hello-Bellevue? look on my face.

"It really began," he started cautiously, staring abstractly at the half-emptied glass, "about three years ago, when Ron Schuster was killed in a three-way pileup on the Post Road."

I nodded. Ron Schuster is one subject definitely taboo when Jean is around, and I've become quite adept at changing the trend of conversation when it seems to be heading for dangerous waters. The general reason for this is that Jean was in love with Ron at one time; the specific reason is that I know damn well there's a whole section of Jean's being which will never belong to anyone except Ronnie, and I don't want that part of her to start clamoring for lebensraum.

Burke leaned forward with wirelike intensity. "You know I was in love with Jean, too. You and I both. But neither of us stood the shadow of a chance so long as Ronnie was around.

"I've figured out the crucial factor: it all revolved around the single incident of who got to Jean first with the news about Ronnie; we were both capable of following it up."

All this, while possibly true, struck me as being somewhat irrelevant, I thought, and said as much.

"And what has time-traveling to do with it?"

"More than you suspect. There's an infinite number of time-lanes, Bob. You, Jean, and I exist in one of them now—here. Ronnie was here, too, for awhile, but he came to a dead end while we kept on going.

"In other time-lanes, perhaps we ran our course before this point, while Jean married Ronnie and lived happily ever after."

This all seemed to be pointing in some direction; I felt uneasy, undecided as to whether I should be annoyed or not.

"Are you trying to lead up to something gracefully?"

He finished the brandy at a gulp, then poured himself some more.

"What I'm trying to do is to tell you about this calmly, in such a manner that you won't think I'm just a mental case."

"Well, how does your dingus work then, and why?"

"To answer the second question first: I haven't the slightest idea. As for the first, I'd rather not go into details about it because it isn't awfully clear to me.

"All I can tell you is this: around a year ago I had a lovely dream about the fourth dimension; I was building tesseracts and whatnot, and finally topped it off with a something-or-other which (it was very clear to me then) formed a sort of bridge to any other world I wanted.

"When I woke up, of course, it all seemed silly, but just for the hell of it, I started to see if I couldn't throw the thing together from memory. Because the details of what I did were still clear in my mind. So I got some books from the library dealing with Einsteinian goulash and got to work on it."

I SHOOK my head disparagingly. "That isn't fair. You have to have a theory; *then* you build your machine. And it takes power by the ton. Fifteen years of science-fiction have proved it."

He grinned. "Then please don't tell any of your editor, writer, or reader friends about this, because I don't want to be lynched. I don't know the why or how, I tell you. Had no idea I'd get anything at all out of all this except something which looked impressive. Something I could show to people and concoct outrageous stories about."

He got up and started thumbing through some of the neatly arranged magazines on the shelf.

"This story," he said, indicating one, "comes reasonably close to what I did. The guy spent years building the machine. Only he didn't know what it was all about. And when he finished, he didn't know what it was he had.

"Well, my case isn't as definite as that. I set out deliberately to make something which (I thought) would do nothing at all. I'd have lots of extra gadgets leading to nowhere, working in screwy angles and such, copying stuff here and there from books and stories on the fourth dimension.

"Last month, I finished it. Well, what was I to do? What did all the science fiction heroes do? I made a preliminary test, of course—turned the power on, set the vibrators humming—"

"Was it at this point or later," I interrupted, "that you first contacted the frog men?"

He shook his head sadly. "Not a frog man in the story book, old sock. I turned on the power as I said before—it looked pretty authoritative, too, I must admit—then said to myself: this is a time machine. I turn the power on, set it to shut off automatically after five minutes. When that happens, I'm snapped back to the present with it, but so long as those 4-dimensional prongs are vibrating, I'll be in—let's see—oh, I'll be in March 4, 1937."

"Have a banana," I interrupted, holding out my case of rum-and-maple flavored cigarettes. Jean avers that they are nothing but dried-out bananas, rolled in cigarette paper, and left overnight in a room with some tobacco. Danny struck a match thoughtfully on the side of the chair.

"I closed my eyes as I pressed the switch, concentrated on the date I'd chosen, counted ten, and opened them. This was fun. I started for the door when something odd struck me. The dingus was gone!

"Not only that, but someone had apparently sneaked in and done away with my new radio-phonograph and substituted an older model for it. When I examined the thing, I saw it was the one I'd turned in about six months ago."

I puffed furiously. "Did you touch anything, find out if all seemed solid?"

"Sure. In fact I dashed out across the street, down to the newsstand to check up on the papers. They all had the same date on them: March 4, 1937. And as I was looking them over, someone turned a radio on and I heard the familiar voice of FDR taking the oath of office for his second term."

"Did you bring anything back?"

"Not then. You see, I figured that, since it really worked, I had only five minutes, and what could I use for proof? A newspaper? Hardly: you can get copies of the papers for that date today—difficult, I admit, but it can be done."

"Did you talk to anyone?"

"Only the clerk at the newsstore. It gave me an odd feeling, because he broke his neck skiing last year. I had to be careful not to make any breaks, then, because I didn't know what I was up against. Then, when I thought my time was about up, I started back. Got half way across the street when *whup* there I was back where I started. Only—five minutes had passed. It's worked out that way every time, by the by; I never come back to the exact point in time from which I started."

"Obviously not," I agreed. "Your controls are set to draw you back after a certain period of time in this sector has passed."

I crushed the cigarette butt. "Well, go on. What did you see? Did you go into the future? See the end of the war? The world?"

HE shook his head. "That sort of thing may be okay for your stories, but I had more personal motives at stake. I'm telling you this now because it's all over, and you've nothing to worry about.

"My idea was to go back to the point in time when you and I heard about Ronnie's being killed, and beat you to Jean in some way."

"Change the past?" I objected. "Can't be done. The fans finally agreed upon that some time ago."

"Why didn't you tell me before? Never would have tried it then. Now your friends have been proven wrong. The past *can* be changed; it's probably being changed constantly.

"There's just one thing about it: it doesn't make any difference because there's an infinite number of time-lanes, and (get this because it's important) *everything that can possibly happen has happened in time.* And there's no such thing as 'impossible' when you deal with infinity.

"Somewhere in time I *did* get there first, did marry Jean. But not the me in this time-lane. So I decided to go back, cancel myself out of this time-lane, find the right moment, cut loose, and get that message to Jean."

"Without trying to appear too deductive, I assume that, since you're here, you failed. Did you find out what was wrong with your theory?"

He laughed somewhat bitterly. "Yeah. There was nothing wrong with it. Nothing at all. I just forgot what a hell of a *big* mess infinity is. Just realized that I could spend my whole life trying and still not make the right lane unless I had some sort of compass for time-traveling."

"You might do it," I suggested, "with a mechanical brain as big as a skyscraper to work out the variables. With that, you might hit it off very nicely. But otherwise, it's like looking for the purple dandelion. There undoubtedly is one, and you can't miss it when you come upon it. But, one reasons, is it worth the trouble?"

"*Jean* is worth it," he said. "But I'd have to find some way of retaining my youth, first. Even then, I wouldn't care to find her after a few thousand years of consciousness, find her with an aeon-old brain in a young body. I'm afraid it just wouldn't be fair to her to say the least."

I tried to picture that. It wouldn't be a case of the brain becoming senile, of course. Assuming you had youth in perpetuo, and remained healthy, the grey cells would be a vibrant as ever. But consciousness—memory—you couldn't keep that young. Picture yourself with the consciousness of an adult snagged in the body and environment of a grammar-school child. If you didn't go nuts before you could adapt yourself to the limitations you'd have to keep under to avoid unbearable complications when you were hailed as a child

prodigy, you'd get all warped up due to lack of companionship. What kid (your age) would want you for a playmate? What adult wouldn't talk and act down to you no matter what? And the arbitrary tyrants adults are to the young. . . . !

"You see?" Dan broke in.

"The first time, when I set out to find Jean, it was rather frightening. It's amazing the number of little changes that occur in just a few years. Stores that aren't there any more; new streets; people you know that hadn't met you back then, or vice versa. And some time when you want to run into mental grief, just try making ordinary conversation, not saying a word you couldn't have said four years ago. The books you've read that hadn't been published at that time; the movies you've seen; the world, state, and national events that haven't happened yet!

"The day that Ronnie was killed, you and I were loafing around a private beach. And I might add that you were in the damndest garrulous mood—or so it seemed when I went back. Do you remember *just* when it was that we heard about Ronnie?"

OF course I remembered. "Sue Carrol told us—that is, she told me. I was dressed and you were getting a few tons of sand out of your hair in the shower room. I yelled in to you, but you couldn't hear me, so I told Sue to pass the word on to you while I hit out for Jean's place."

"That's right. And then, when I did come out of the shower, I couldn't find my pants."

I gulped some more cognac as I suddenly remembered *why* Dan hadn't been able to find his trousers that afternoon."

"*That's* right," he grinned. "So I had to see to it that I'd be all dressed and ready by the time Sue showed up. As I recalled it, Sue came around 2 P. M.; so at 1:45 I suggested to you that we have a little competition, dinner on the loser. See which one of us took longer to fetch a marble tossed just beyond the float. I flipped a coin and you won for the first try."

"Oh, did I?"

"Fortunately, you didn't ask to see the coin."

"And when I came back, like Royer, with the marble in my mouth, you were gone, eh?"

"Correct. But I was a little too anxious." At this point he made some ungentlemanly remarks about the cops on the Post Road. "So, when I arrived at last, you had beaten me to it."

"Well," I remonstrated, "that was only your first try. Didn't you make out any better later on?"

He filled his pipe wearily. "I tried every day, several times a day, for three solid weeks. Every time *something* got in the way. On one occasion neither of us made it because you, you dog, had an' attack of cramps and Sue and I had to break our backs giving you artificial respiration. Oh, infinity! What I learned! You know, I hit some time lanes where I didn't exist?"

"What?"

"In those time-lanes, I'd either been killed, had died naturally, or just hadn't been born. And once I met my sister—"

"Hold it," I broke in. "I take it you go bodily into the past, eh? Not just your consciousness fastening upon your body as of that date?"

"That's where the business becomes fantastic. The thing occurred to me suddenly, and left me in a cold sweat at the prospect of meeting myself. But, so far, I never have. Yet, we have to assume that I went physically into the past, because, had it been otherwise, I would have found myself in a woman's body in one of those lanes. It's horribly confusing, and I don't think I really want to know the answer. As it was, I met my sister—or was it I?"

"Your story breaks down at another point," I went on relentlessly. "Let's suppose that you actually do what you set out to do. Okay. Here, however, your dingus is set so that the power will shut off auto-

matically after a given period, and, when it does you are brought back to *this* time-lane.

"It's no better than if you never went. In fact, somewhat worse. Losing Jean that way after you'd finally won her. . . ."

He nodded forlornly. "I know. Have to take a chance on that. You're forgetting, though, the utterly fantastic things that have already happened. I made a time-traveler and it worked just the way I wanted it to. Forgot to tell you that, after I started the search, I didn't set the power to shut off at all. Just willed myself to come back.

"That part of it happened accidentally. I was so excited one time when I almost made it, that I set out again at once. When I arrived, I remembered that I hadn't arranged for the power. Tried willing myself to return, and it worked."

"What about those time-lanes where you didn't exist at the point you wanted?"

"Frightening. I felt solid enough, and people accepted me as real for the nonce, though no one knew me. But there was one aspect about it all that made me half sick with terror.

"You see, Bob, there's no limitations to this thing unless we make them ourselves. You can mess around with cosmic laws all you like, play with infinity, have yourself a glorious time. But factors balance, sometimes automatically. And when that happens you are likely to find yourself in a mess, because the forces involved don't ask you your preferences in the matter first.

"Unless you're smart enough to size them up right and make the necessary modifications or arrangements, you may be stuck and stuck bad."

"Dan!" I cried suddenly. "Balances already *have* been upset. What's to prevent all manner of weird things happening all through the time stream as a result of what you've been doing?"

SUDDENLY he looked old. "Not a goddam thing. Nothing's happened yet; we've got to assume, for the sake of sanity, that nothing will happen now. At least to us. Here. Our smallness in the cosmos may make us safe in the end.

"It's like a single colony of microbes, swimming around happily in their natural habitat in the midst of a big city which is being bombed. The odds are that this particular little pool of water won't be touched in any way."

I laughed then. "Burke, you fiend! You've given me the works and done it well. Now confess: you just made this all up."

He shook his head. "The dingus is still over at my place. You can see it, feel it, try it out if you like. Me—I'm afraid I've got something akin to shellshock—I'll never be able to bring myself to use it again."

I still thought it was a case of superb acting as I climbed into Dan's chariot and we puttered away. But he wasn't joking after all. The contraption looked just about the way he described it, and I spent a half hour split between hysteria and hilarity somewhere back in 1933. I even wrote some notes on the spot, put them in a place where they should keep. Only trouble is that I forgot that *that* part of the house burned down in 1936.

"Dan," I said as we locked the door behind us, "how close did you come to making it?"

He buried his face in his hands. "I *did* make it once—the final trip. I decided that it was dangerous waiting around for Sue Carroll to dash in with the news about Ronnie, so I found some excuse to leave around noon.

"Jean was at home—with some man I've never seen before—but when she saw the look on my face, it wasn't difficult to get her aside. She looked at me somewhat oddly, though.

" 'Jean,' I began, 'I've some rather bad news for you; I'm afraid it's going to be a shock. It's about Ronnie.'

"She looked at me blankly. 'Ronnie,' she murmured. 'Ronnie who?' "

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THIS issue of *Future* will be on all stands in April. Now April is a very distinctive month, as oldtimers will tell you, in the world of science fiction, for the very first issue of the very first all-science fiction magazine bore that date. April, 1926.

Science fiction, as a modern pulp-magazine proposition, designed to satisfy the desires of tens of thousands of imaginative-fiction enthusiasts all over the world (for, up to the recent conflict you *could* obtain your favorite magazine in any part of the world), is now sweet sixteen.

Sixteen years ago, the first issue of *Amazing Stories* appeared—a large size magazine, bearing a cover by Frank R. Paul from Jules Verne's famous "Hector Severadac." (It ran in the book under the title of "Off on a Comet.") In the same issue were "The New Accelerator" by H. G. Wells, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" by Edgar Allen Poe, "The Thing From—Outside" by George Allan England, "The Man Who Saved the Earth" by Austin Hall, "The Man From the Atom" by G. Peyton Wertenbaker—and others. Some of these stories had long been classics; others many readers recognized as having come from the pens of some of the many popular authors of the day, who now and then turned their hand to the "fantastic" novel or story. Needless to say, the magazine was successful with its first issue.

AND the man who edited this pioneer magazine, sixteen years ago, was one already well known to thousands of readers of such magazines as "Science and Invention," "Radio News" and the old "Electrical Experimenter" —Hugo Gernsback.

HUGO GERNSBACK remained at the post of that first magazine for some years, then later brought out the second title, *Science Wonder Stories*. In 1930, the third title appeared, under the old Clayton banner. By that time, science fiction magazines were off to a solid start. There have been ups and downs ever since, but the number of titles have increased nonetheless. And today they are still going strong.

WE think that this is a particularly fine occasion upon which to present a short-short science fiction tale by the "father of science fiction magazines," and hope you'll enjoy *The Infinite Brain*.

THE spotlite, this time, singles out Bok first of all. Young Hannes had a bit of first class competition from Monroe and Keller, both well established and highly popular scribes, but *Alien Vibration* still managed to nose its way into first place. Nose is the right word here, because up to the last moment it looked as if *My Object All Sublime* would tie with the yarn. It was nip and tuck from the first batch of letters to the last.

We're using a new system of rating these days—one which we think is more accurate, and which is more in line wtih the way you put things when you write in. There were five stories this February issue—we marked figures from 1 to 5, all according to how you placed them: thus the highest a story could rate would be 1 and the lowest 5. And they came out this way *The Alien Vibration* (1.9); *My Object All Sublime* (2.2); *The Pit of Doom* (2.7), *Beyond the Stars* (3.4) and *Sacrifice at* (3.8). That last number is distinctly encouraging to ye ed: it means that while Mason's yarn came in last place, you still thought it was a good story.

What we do is this: add up the score and divide by the number of votes for the mean. The Bok yarn got 7 votes for first place, 5 for second, two for third and 2 for fourth. Every story received at least 1 vote for 1st place and Bok is the only one to receive no votes for 5th place—which is the kind of disagreement we like to see.

WITH cover, artwork, and departments, we stick to the old system. The cover thls time, rated several points higher than Bok's December frontspiece. On the interiors, Hannes and Dolgov were tied, while Knight's pic was close behind—Damon seems to be showing an improvement, and we think you'll like his work more and more as he gets in stride. The letters received so far on the April *Future* bear this contention out rather well. The departments rated way up as usual.

THERE have been a number of requests for the return of stf's senior artist, Frank R. Paul, so you're seeing him in the full page for Gordon's *World in Balance*. We expect to have more by him, but are saving those tales bearing the distinct flavor which demands a Paul picture.

The Ayes and Noes of Future's Readers

Station X

JAMES BLISH has done a rather nice bit of development upon the Metals, which, as some of you may recall, figured in *The Topaz Gate* last August. Jim dropped in on us some time back and expounded muchly upon "Ulysses" and "Finnegan's Wake" over steaming platters of fried rice. And those of you who follow the fan press may recall a series of articles pertaining to fantasy music he compiled last year.

WE owe you all an apology. You'll recall that we promised *The Darkest Night,* by Hugh Raymond, for this issue. Alas, however, fate was agin' us. After much consultation with us, Raymond informed us one evening that he'd be over with the completed mss., plus the carbon to give to the artist. He was also bringing back some old volumes of fan mags he'd borrowed.

Somewhere, somehow, the envelope containing the original and carbon of *The Darkest Night* vanished en route—and since Raymond is a very busy man during the day, the story couldn't be redone in time for the printer. So, we told him to forget about it for the moment, and try again later.

Thus, we present *The Real McCoy,* a tale you would have seen sooner or later in any event. The foregoing is another reason why editors and authors age rapidly.

AS we type this, a stiff February gale rattles our windowpane. But by the time you read this, buds should be budding and birds birding. Which is why *The Spring Machine* was put in right away, as soon as we saw it. And, despite our appreciation of female glances which stray in our direction now and then, we're definitely happy *not* to be in such a position as Prof Honeyby in Kummer's tale.

BREATHES there the fan who has not heard of Bob Tucker? We don't think so; at times, we wonder if anyone could live a full life without having heard of Tucker. At any rate, *The Princess of Detroit* gladdened our mail one day and we hope it will gladden a half hour or so for you. And artist Forte did himself proud on it, don't you think?

MILLARD VERNE GORDON first popped up in 1935 with an odd little tale called "The Space Lens," and we've been noting his output on and off ever since. *World in Balance* is a nice example of the old-time stf yarn which was packed with thought-stuff.

WHEN you get this, there should still be time to pick up a copy of the Spring issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly* at the corner stand—and it's an issue worth picking up, if you haven't already done so. Hannes Bok has done a lovely cover for Ray Cummings' famous novel *The Shadow Girl,* one of his best. That last can refer to either the story or cover, as you see fit: we say both.

Also, in this issue (#6), you'll find an unusual novelet by Paul Dennis Lavond entitled *Einstein's Planetoid*—a tale concerning as odd a world as you ever read of. The picture is by Conanight (Damon Knight and Chester B. Conant collaborating) and is quite the thing. You'll find, as well, a unique shortale in *Gangway for Homer,* by George R. Hahn, a quiet little bit of epic nonsense which had us grinning from beginning to end. There's also a lovely screwy yarn by Cecil Corwin, entitled *Crisis*—ably illustrated by Bok; two shorts: *Saknarth,* by Millard Verne Gordon and *Mission,* by John Hollis Mason, and the popular department, *Prime Base.* Copies are

(Continued On Page 102)

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(Continued From Page 101)

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AL ASHLEY, editor of that excellent fanzine *Nova* (obtainable for 15 cents the copy from him at 86 Upton Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan) writes in part: "As you may have noticed in the copy of the first issue of *Nova* recently mailed you, we have determined upon a policy of full co-operation with the pro-magazines. Speaking as editor of *Nova*, and as an officer of the newly formed Michigan Fantasy Fan Federation, I believe I can honestly state that the Michigan group are all now in accord with this policy.

"We believe that whatever other goals fankind may have, this is one thing it must not lose sight of in the flurry of its many activities. To aid in carrying out this policy and to spread its acceptance over the whole fan world, we need all the ideas and suggestions we can possibly obtain.

"Therefore, we are writing to the editor of each of the science fiction and fantasy magazines, requesting an article dealing with some phase of this problem."

WE would say that those fans who want to co-operate with the editors of stf magazines can help best by a three-point program: reading and criticising each issue, findin new readers, and writing controversial articles dealing with the professionals for fanzines.

Fankind is now beginning to get more or less organized, through the medium of various groups on international, national, regional or local scales. It is now more than ever in a position to make use of the fact that it is a collection of experts on science and fantasy pulp fiction.

But for the past year or so, fankind has neglected its opportunities, in fact turned its back upon them. Look over the list of individuals now rating as "top" fans. Look them over carefully. *How many of them do you see regularly in the readers' sections of the various professional magazines?* And of those whom you do see now and then, how many write the carefully thought-out, meaty, critical letters of the type that first made the stfmag discussions department the thing ye seasoned reader went for first? Few.

The fans are active enough. But so far as the editors are concerned, they haven't been much of an asset for some time. They've been much too busy blowing their own horns—in itself certainly no cause for condemnation, of course—which is not the kind of activity to make editors and publishers feel that here is a group of people whose opinions are valuable.

IN regard to finding new readers for whichever professional magazine the individual fan prefers, this shouldn't have to be listed at all—yet, we suspect that this (once to be taken for granted) aspect of fan activity has also slumped. It's important, lads, if you really want to share in the production and distribution of pulp science fiction and fantasy.

And finally, the fanzines offer field for discussion which the most liberal readers' sections cannot always offer. This opportunity, we note, has not been as badly neglected as others—it should be exploited to an even fuller extent, however.

Fankind started out as an adjunct to the professional magazines. The first large size fan clubs were virtually dependent upon them; little by little the clubs and the fans and the fanzines became more and more independent until they were, in many cases, ig-

noring the main sources of stf and fantasy completely. Just goes to show what increasing specialization leads to. Fankind needs to return to first principles.

And now let's hear from

R. R. WINTERBOTHAM

Dear Doc: I gather from the last pages of the February FF that somebody has called me harebrained. I ain't mad, because I ain't sure what he means. If he means there is a discrepancy in **The Thought Feeders,** *that's fine. I can see some he missed.*

I did not intend to enter the field of metaphysics. I was telling an amusing little incident that might not have happened. When I write metaphysics, I'll let you know.

For the purpose of your readers' entertainment, I'll give you some free harebrained metaphysics that shows just how easy it is to find fault with a story. My premise is that "Cinderella" should not be read to children because it leads them to drink.

You, and the guy that called me harebrained, are familiar with the story of Cindy, I hope. I have carefully perused the story and I find no mention of Cindy's having washed or taken a bath before going to the dance at which she met the prince. The prince was quite taken with the dirty little gal, as the story leads us to believe. Therefore, something must have been wrong with his eyes and sense of smell. There is nothing in the story to indicate that he was blind, or had had his nose cut off. Therefore, he must have been drunk—his senses were not normal. The fact that the hero is drunk will lead young readers to imitate him, hoping thus to get a princess with a fairy godmother. The story thus leads younguns to drink.

God mother! Don't ever read me "Cinderella" again!

420 West Kansas,
Pittsburg, Kansas,

Thanks no end for writing in. As we mentioned before, we're keeping out of such battles, but the field's wide open to any readers who want to get in a few thwacks for either side. For those who came in late, *The Thought Feeders* by R. R. Winterbotham appeared in the October, 1941, issue of *Future Combined with Science Fiction,* and Mr. Damon Knight's assault in the February, 1942, issue. Copies are still available at 15 cents each, though we can't guarantee how long they'll remain so. In the meantime, here is

VICTOR MAYPER, JR.

Dear Doc: Well, here I am again, come to plague you with comments. Now—to the ratings (if you don't mind, I'll keep my old methods of rating—0 to 10—as I keep records. If you want to translate, 6.0 corresponds approximtaely to your midpoint with 10 the highest possible rating.)

First—**My Object All Sublime**—*9.0 Darn good! I've liked Lyle Monroe ever since I read* **Lost Legion,** *and this proves that I was right. I wonder if we could have some more of Professor Cuthbert Higgins?*

Second—**The Pit of Doom**—*8.4 The Old Master himself. Ever since I read—but I'm repeating myself, am I not? Well, anyway, I like Keller, or rather, Keller's style of writing.*

Third—**Sacrifice**—*8.3. I don't know why I liked this; I can give absolutely no reason for it, yet I do.*

Fourth—**The Alien Vibration**—*7.9 Just as Bok is a fantasy artist, he seems to be a fantasy writer. If this were a fantasy mag, his yarn would get around 8.2 or 8.3. But I thought* **Future** *was suposed to be a stf mag. However, I stand open to correction. If*

(Continued On Page 104)

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(Continued From Page 103)

it is officially stf and *fantasy, revise my rating up to 8.3.*

Fifth—Beyond the Stars—*6.7. Last, where Cummings usually is. If you* must *use a reprint for every long novel, at least reprint good stories. Oh, you want to know why I dislike Cummings. Four very good reasons. (1) His ideas. Every single story he writes, with a few exceptions, is a variation on one of three themes—robot revolt, into the macrocosm (as this is), and into the atom. (2) His plots. Without exception, his plots just plain stink. (3) His writing. See comment upon plots. (4) His science. Really, I hate to see science outraged the way he usually outrages it. He gives "scientific" explanations that are above the heads of two year olds and plain ridiculous to anyone else. Take* Beyond the Stars. *If his "intimes" are infinitely smaller than atoms, and our universe is just an "intime" in a gigantic atom, it will take an infinite time to expand to the size of that atom, no matter how large a finite rate of expansion he uses. (If, of course, he used an infinite rate of expansion, he would get there, but it would take him an infinite time to accelerate to this rate of expansion, no matter how fast he accelerated. I perceive that at this point, Mr Cummings' mathematics give way. But it's true—consult any reliable mathematician.)*

I hate to take up so much space explaining why I don't like a writer, but it has been on the tip of my typewriter for the last three weeks, and reading this story just put on the last straw.

Except for Cummings' "classic science fiction novel" the issue was extremely good. The cover was pretty good 7.8—Bok is illustrating a story more suited to his style this time. When do we get the latest misadventure of Ajax Calkins? You merely say "coming."

Here's hoping you get rid of that "combined with Science Fiction" on the cover. It makes the title cumbersome.

Interior illustrations—Again, Dolgov is a fantasy artist, not stf. Same for Bok—although he is illustrating a fantasy story, so I guess it's okay. Damon Knight is good.

Station X's *new makeup is much better than the old—particularly the several paragraphs of comments before the letters. Bill Stoy's letter seems about the best this time.*

Having dissected the February issue (and Cummings in the bargain) I now proceed to start two crusades—one, for the abolishment of reprints (especially Cummings reprints), two for trimmed edges (this has little hope of succeeding, but I'll start it anyway).

Well, I guess I'll close now. Sincerely,

The Manlius School
Manlius, New York

We're happy to say that your first plank in the crusade has an excellent chance of adoption; we expect to use only new stories now, at least in *Future*. For the *Quarterly*—well, it goes like this: whenever we can get a top-notch new science fiction novel for the *Quarterly*, we'll be glad to use it. We're featuring all new material in the Summer issue, coming up; but first rate booklength novels are not to be had every day in the week. Now, despite the fact that you, and a few others, don't particularly care for Cummings, his stuff has still been quite popular, as circulation figures on the issues containing the reprints show. Thus, if we don't see a new novel that hits us hard enough, in time, we'll be presenting more of the old Cummings' tales which have proven so popular in the past. There are several which were very well re-

ceived, and which many readers, mentioning possible future reprints, have asked to see.

For *Future,* however, as we said before, it's all new stuff. Partly because we've saving novels for the *Quarterly,* and partly because you readers have made us feel that a larger number of stories per issue is requisite. We don't like to turn down good stories because a policy of novels in each issue taking up most of the space won't allow their inclusion.

We haven't any "reliable mathematicians" on hand to consult in regard to your critique of Mr Cummings' science, so we'll have to leave it to other readers to confirm or reject.

In regard to trimmed edges—yes, they're very nice. We like 'em, too. But they are an added expense, and here's the rub. If we spend extra money on that, it means so much less for other things. We've felt that you'd rather see more and better illustrations first of all—and we'd also like to offer our authors a bit more lucre whenever possible. Spending extra funds on edge-trimming would get in the way of that project because *Future* hasn't the largest stf pulp circulation yet. It's going up—and that's encouraging—but we still have a long way to go before your editor will begin really to be satisfied with the book. Little by little we are approaching our goal. You readers can all help with your letters of criticism, as well as by spreading the rumor around that *Future* is a magazine to follow.

In regard to fantasy—note our contest in this issue. For the moment, we're using both stf and fantasy, but our final decision in this matter will rest with the response we receive in the question. Now, here is

P. SCHUYLER MILLER

While my New Year's resolution of getting things done lasts (it will be gone before this letter is mailed—at least it always has vanished like that) I am going to outline a project for you to pass on to fandom via Station X.

Briefly it is this. I and, I suspect, many other fans have often felt the need for some kind of classification for science fiction yarns. Suppose we want to make a card catalogue for our collection—I do, and I even started it at one time. Such a catalogue should have at least three cards for every story: title, author, and subject. But just as libraries have accepted lists of subject-headings for books (they fill volumes), so science fiction fandom, in my opinion, should have its list of subject-headings for stf, and even for fantasy. I'd suggest starting on the former: it should be easier.

Some of the headings are very simple; maybe they're too simple. Interplanetary—Mars; Interstellar—Arcturus; Time-Travel—Past; Super Physics (the "Skylark" or Campbell type); Future War. And so they go. Can fans, working through your departments, or through some of the established fan magazines which are interested in that kind of thing (I've unfortunately lost track of them since the ISA days), or both, or neither, work out such a classification? Then my little cards will be able to say that **The Alien Vibration** *belongs to Type K and* **The Pit of Doom** *to Type G, or maybe to Type GR, if it straddles the fence. Also, which is more to the point, I can riffle through the file on "Mars" and at once find all the yarns with that locale, pick out the one I'm looking for, and then reach for the proper issue of the proper magazine (some day they'll all be bound, let's hope, though the longer I wait, the more it's going to cost. Maybe I'll work on a WPA bookbinding project come the next depression.)*

(Continued On Page 106)

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Future Combined with Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 105)

This may have been done by one of the magazines of fandom. There was a project under way once to work out an annotated bibliography of science fiction and fantasy, covering all books and magazines for all time, but I wasn't able to do anything on it and I don't know whether anyone else did. If such a bibliography and/or such a classification could be worked out, they might be sold to finance the next fanvention. The bibliography might even be put on microfilm. Even if you haven't a viewer, the gal next door will have an enlarger in her darkroom, and the next time you're down there she'll probably be more than glad to have you slip your film into the enlarger and sit down and read—or do I underestimate your appeal? (Your is meant in the general sense, and not as referring to any editor, living or dead, who for all I know may have scores of girls visiting his own darkroom every day.) ((!!! Ed.))

Oyes—the matter of Verne's sequels to "Mysterious Island," mentioned in Futurian Times. My own copy of the book is buried somewhere, but you'll find that the two sequels are usually included as Books 2 and 3 in modern editions of the story, just as "From the Earth to the Moon" was originally the first of two parts—or like "The Face in the Abyss" and "The Snake Mother"; "The Moon Pool" and "The Conquest of the Moon Pool," and so on. I wonder if the recent biography of Verne, which I haven't seen, will cast any light on the subject. Some reigning fan should review it for you in a future issue, and give you the full list of his stories, if one is included.

Bok's covers certainly are distinctive, and give science fiction something it hasn't had since the first days of Paul. Then when you saw a Paul cover, you reached for whatever was behind it; now you can do the same thing for Bok. Lord help us when he starts illustrating "True Seductions," or something like that.

And I hope that something useful may come of this suggestion—useful to me and the others.

302 So. Ten Broeck St.,
Scotia, New York

Thanks for the info on the Verne sequels. In regard to the index of stf, we think it's a swell idea—something that should have been started long ago—and trust that some group will get to work on it soon. It'll be a Herculean task, no doubt. But the NFFF should be able to handle it, we think. Thanks for writing. Now, here is

JAMES W. THOMAS

This letter is to remedy a most distressing condition. Of late I have been going over my collection of fantasy and science fiction and in so doing, I have become aware of the aforementioned lamentable state of affairs, namely, the complete lack of letters from Rhode Island fans. It can't be that I am the only R. I. fan!? No, that's impossible. Someone buys the stf that is left on the stands after I purchase my monthly quota. And those back issues that I pick up now and then, they come from somewhere. Surely a state that produced such a writer as H. P. Lovecraft cannot be entirely destitute of fans. Anyway, this letter is, in effect, a voice from the wilderness and if it gets into print, it will be the first letter from R. I. that I have ever seen in an stf magazine.

On to the Feb. issue. Cover, excellent. Hannes Bok is an artist in the highest sense of the word. Interiors, also excellent. Strikes

(Continued On Page 110)

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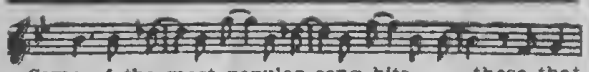
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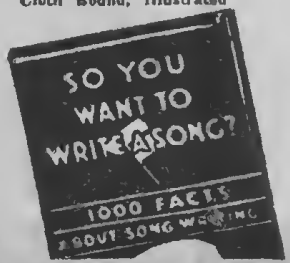
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Future Combined with Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 106)

me that Knight's work might be improved by more, and darker shading.

Beyond the Stars *was first for my money. By the way, I see that the "Slam Cummings Campaign" is getting under way in your* **Station X** *as well as in several of your contemporary readers' columns. Seems the boys have nothing personal against the old maestro except that he isn't writing as well as he used to. Ah well. Seems to me, though, that he is still writing as well as many of the authors that are hitting the field regularly.*

Bok was next with **The Alien Vibration.** *Rather well handled, I thought, though rough in spots and indistinct in others.*

My Object All Sublime *darn near got second place over Bok's story. I liked the ending. That suggestion that the reporter's object in the future would be, like that of Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado, something short of sublime.*

Sacrifice *took fourth place over* **The Pit of Doom.** *It was nice handling of an old idea. It would have profited by expansion.* **Pit of Doom!** *We-e-e-l—. To sum up, the issue looks something like this to me.*

1. **Beyond the Stars**—*9.5; 2.* **The Alien Vibration**—*8; 3.* **My Object All Sublime**—*7.5. 4.* **Sacrifice**—*5; 5.* **The Pit of Doom**—*3 or less.*

Station X has improved immeasurably. Now at last we can tell where the letters end and the editorial comment begins. I agree with Mr. Stoy in regard to the name, however. Future's Forum would be much better.

What's this I see? **"Get rid of Bok! No more Bok!"** *My dear Editor, what does this mean? After Mr. Andresen specifically, dogmatically, and didactically ordered you to get rid of Bok (and I gather from his letter that he favors direct methods such as taking friend Hannes over to the nearest washstand and quietly slitting his throat with a dull razor) you have the colossal gall to put out the Feb. issue of Future with a cover by Bok, a story by Bok, and two interiors by Bok. Sirrah, I demand that you resign your post immediately, immediately, and appoint Mr. Andresen as your successor. I am sure that that gentleman of the o so constructive criticism will brook no more insolence from you.*

My vote for the best letter goes to Anthony C. Tarr for that ingenious postscript of his. However, I, too, have a theory. Is it not possible that a goodly percentage of the inmates of our numerous looney bins are persons who have seen time voyagers ond then talked about it, and that a smaller percentage of the population at large consists of persons who have seen time travellers and hove had the good sense to keep quiet about it?

Sincerely,
134 Dexter Street,
Valley Falls, R. I.

We seem to recall having seen a few letters or rather a letter, once in a while, from Rhode Island in past years. But they *have* been few, we must admit—nor can we figure out why. We lived in Newport, R. I., many years back—it was there that we saw that initial issue of *Amazing* on the stands—and have dropped by off and on since leaving. Far's we recall, the stands there always had a goodly supply of stf magazines which diminished rapidly as weeks went by. Still—so few letters. . . .

Most of you readers do not seem to have agreed with Mr. Andresen's commentary on Bok—the above letter is a more or less good-natured example of the reaction. However, we wanted to find out for sure, which is why the letter was presented—and even if we

(Continued On Page 112)



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Introduction by Edward Podolsky, M. D.
Foreword by James Parker Hendry
Need for sex understanding to aid married happiness — book offers key to true understanding of sex.

Chapter 1 — Married Men Should Know
Instinct is not enough — the wedding night—perpetuating the honeymoon — functions of organs and body in marriage relations —skillful wooer can overcome timidities.

Chapter 2—Love Problems of Wives
Why marriages fail—wife often frustrated, disappointed—husband should improve in sexual relations —set routine grows boresome — case of the under-sexed wife — how to keep love alive.

Chapter 3—Scientific Sex Program in Marriage
Marriage based on mutual love and co-operation—instructions for performing and following marriage sex program—chart of safe periods —normal frequency of relations

Chapter 4—Functions of Organs
The purpose of sex—how conception takes place — secondary stimuli zones — attaining highest pitch in compatibility.

Chapter 5—The Art of Married Love
The importance of preparation—first act the courtship or love-making—second part of the Coitus—many positions possible—final act or climax—half hour all too short for courtship—develop mutual sexual rhythm—reaching climax together—women often unsatisfied — problems of physical mismatching—overcoming difficulties.

Chapter 6—Secrets of Sex Appeal
What does a man notice—how to dress for charm and appeal—choosing clothing, attending to complexion, figure and personality.

Chapter 7—Dangers of Petting
Is it wise to pet to be popular?—Embracing bodies and kissing lips dangerous?—yearning desires difficult to control.

Chapter 8—How to produce ideal conditions for marital relations in your home.

Chapter 9—Birth Control
A moral issue long debated—arguments in favor and against limitation of children—mechanical contrivances against law—various methods used — no method ideal.

Chapter 10—Mistaken ideas on sex.

Chapter 11—Advice to married people.

Chapter 12—Pregnancy
Changes following fertilization—first indications of pregnancy—care of prospective mother—abortions and miscarriages—dangers of pregnancy—preparations for birth —pregnancy 280 days approximately.

Chapter 13—Techniques favorable for mutual satisfaction.

Chapter 14—Can Sex of Unborn Child Be Chosen
Science investigating various theories—no certain methods.

Chapter 15—Motherhood
Actual process of childbirth—follow doctor's instructions — caesarian operations — puerperal fever — summary for prospective mothers.

Chapter 16 — Methods of Easy Childbirth
Select doctor you have complete confidence in—follow his instructions—anesthetics which diminish labor pains without injuring infant.

Chapter 17—Intimate Questions of Husbands
Overcoming some common sexual problems—how to attain "control" —importance of prolonged courtship—effect of frequency of control—overcoming frigidity in wives —can impotency be overcome—organic deficiencies—various faults and their remedies.

Chapter 18—Intimate Questions of Wives
Importance of free discussion with husband—avoid haste—be patient—strive for perfection—sex a mutual matter—abstinence and excesses—intimate women problems.

Chapter 19—Feminine Hygiene and Beauty
How to develop your charm and sex appeal.

Chapter 20—Discussion of sexual types.

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(Continued From Page 110)

were sure, Mr. Andresen still has the right to express his opinion on the subject without fear of being spirited away in the night to some concentration camp. Let's hear now from

GLADYS JONES

I do not like to be too critical or too particular, or anything like that, but after reading your last three issues, I confess that I felt not one thrill of interest in any of the stories, with the possible exception of **Quarry.**

Ray Cummings' novels start well, but bog down in the opening chapters. Before reaching the "story" part, I am either bored stiff or have fallen asleep. Why does he drag them out to such an intolerable length? **In Beyond the Stars** *he took five chapters to explain the space-flight. Why? He could have told it in two—or even less.*

Your best stories are the shortest ones. Why not add a little onto them, and cut something off the longer ones?

I enjoyed **The Alien Vibration,** *although it was a trifle overdone. Perhaps we will hear more, and see a little less—of Mr. Bok in the future?*

Of all the stories in the February issue, I liked **My Object All Sublime** *best.*

Please, Mr. Lowndes, we fans read fiction to get away from the sameness of our daily lives. We want stories that are different—romantic and amusing—with a few real thrills thrown in for good measure. Can't we expect to find at least one such in every magazine? Here's hoping.

4546 Orcas,
Seattle, Washington

Here's hoping that this, and the preceding issue of *Future*, is closer to your wishes. You will hear more from Bok: vide the short novel in the coming Quarterly—and, another wish come true, you'll see less.

Only I'm afraid this will come as bad news to a good many readers. Hannes Bok has quit illustrating. He's taken up writing and fine art instead. To say anything more than that we'll miss his covers and interiors in *Future* would be superfluous—except that we do have a few more tales, already illustrated by Hannes, coming up. Now, here is

EMIL PETAJA

I was attracted to **Future** *by the highly superior December cover by Hannes Bok, and bought it, despite having been informed (or rather misinformed) that* **Future** *was "just another science fiction magazine." I was delighted with Wilfred Owen Morley's* **No Star Shall Fall.** *Needless to say, I'm with you from now on, if you'll only keep printing* **different** *stories like this one. The kind you seldom see amongst the ray-gun rocket-ship commonplace yarns. And right along with this, add Bok's* **Alien Vibration.** *It's quite a surprise to find such a talented artist gifted with an almost equal writing ability. How about another? Glad to see David H. Keller in your pages.*

As to your novels, I'm not so keen on them. First, I've read them before; second, in the hectic days we're in now, most of us have to read "on the run" so to speak, and haven't time to sit down and absorb a novel-length story. By the time you get around to reading the last part, you've forgot what it's all about.

I suppose Clifford Andresen is entitled to his point of view, but . . . There's not much doubt that Hannes Bok stands head and shoulders above every sf artist in any sf magazine, with Dolgov second. Not only does his work heighten the interest in any story, and keep his vast group of admirers shouting with

joy, but each picture displays his keen talent in picturing ultrascientific and bizarre, with occasionally a subtly satiric bit of grotesque humor. Please! More Bok!

Yours for a brighter **Future,**
509 So. Grandview St.,
Los Angeles, Cal.

Thanks no end for the closing line. Hmm, seems as if there might be some 5th columnists out on the west coast, what with these scurrilous rumors that *Future* is "just another magazine" going around. We don't mind if some people mutter around the post offices that *Future* stinketh (so long as they tell us about it, too)—after all, ye ed needs a good swift kicke in ye pantse now and then—but calling us "just another magazine"—people have been lynched for less!

Seriously, we hope that you'll find enough "different" stories in each issue to keep you comin'. We can't use all "different" stories—otherwise we'd have a very enthusiastic coterie of a few hundred readers, and that's about all. We have to appeal to great numbers of people who are not quite as elite in the subject—but we do not mean by that that we consider it necessary to publish badly written, sickeningly hackneyed, or just plain bang-bang stories. You may find some which seem to you to fall into such categories—but that'll be where we disagree—although, in such a case, it's up to you to write in and convince us we're wrong, if you can.

So *Station X* closes shop for another issue See you next time, we hope. In the meantime, we'll whet your appetite a bit by mentioning that we have a number of corkers ready for you—such as *The Case of the Vanishing Cellars* by J. S. Klimaris—introducing two gentlemen named Wilbur and Stevenson: they're investigators, representatives of the Society for the Investigation of Unusual Phenomena. And it seems that something out of the ordinary has been happening—people's cellars just—disappear! Then there's *The Air Whale* by Jim Blish, an enjoyable little tale, and coming up will be more of Ajax Calkins, we hope, as well as tales by Arthur G. Strangland, Bob Tucker and Dick Wilson. Until we see you anon, why not share the pleasure you get out of *Future* by introducing it to new readers? Sincerely, R. W. Lowndes.



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Food Problems
Complete diets for reducing, gaining weight—high blood pressure-acid stomach-constipation, etc. What to know about food, diets and eating.
Exercise
Home exercise for regaining a youthful figure-facial exercises to prevent wrinkles, sunken cheeks, etc.
Beautiful Women Past 40
Attaining new beauty after youth disappears — developing poise and charm of maturity-dressing for beauty after 40.
Love in the Middle Years
Attractiveness to male does not end—leading a normal and complete sex life.
The Sex Heritage
Characteristics of sex in women—the sex course from puberty to old age.
Menopause-The Great Change
Symptoms and emotional complications — which happens within the body—what to do to go through this period easily — hygiene — diet — care — safeguards.
Strange Sex Channels
Abnormalities that sometimes crop up after 40—how to recognize and escape them.
Sex Life After the Menopause
Sex Desire and Sex ability does not end with the menopause—sublimating your energies in interesting ways.
Stimulating Waning Sex
The use of various methods —foods—perfumes—odors—touch — warm colors — music etc. Prudery of grace.
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Adjustment of married life after 40—gateway to richer, happier periods—new freedom in expression, sex, life.
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When the single woman should marry—sex problems—interests and activities — adjusting yourself to a new mate.
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Additional problems that present themselves—should she remarry—life without a husband—advice for widows.
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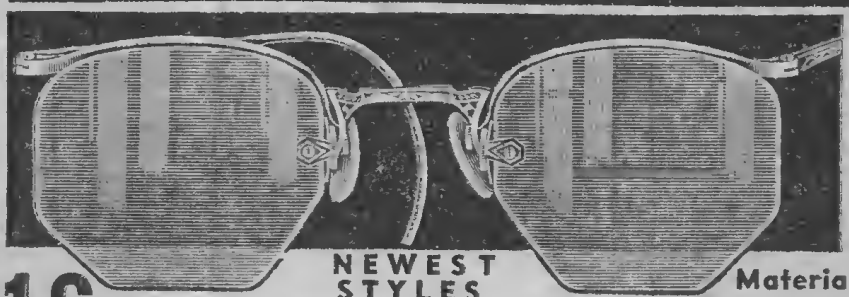
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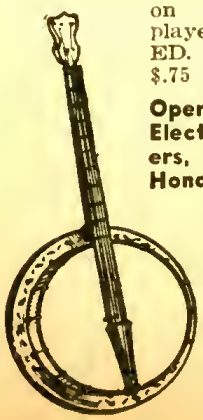
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